University Students’ Council Standing Policy
Experiential Learning Policy Paper

Legislative History

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Land Acknowledgement

The University of Western Ontario is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have long-standing relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western University values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

To learn more about these Indigenous communities and how you can best be an ally, please refer to the [London & Middlesex Indigenous Culture Card](#). For more information about land acknowledgements, please refer to the article “Rethinking the Practice and Performance of Indigenous Land Acknowledgment” by Robinson et al. A land acknowledgement is an important step in recognizing colonial history but should by no means be the full extent to which we acknowledge and support indigenous communities.
Key Terms

**Experiential Learning (EL):** Experiential Learning activities -- such as internships, co-ops, community engaged learning, and clinical placements -- provide students opportunities to 'learn while doing.' Experiential Learning asks students to apply their theoretical knowledge to real-world environments. These opportunities require students to step outside the classroom and consider how community, industry and/or field experience might influence their academic learning and personal development. Experiential Learning is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of different types of learning experiences, including Work Integrated Learning, Community-Engaged Learning, and Career Integrated Learning.

**Work Integrated Learning (WIL):** Work Integrated Learning provides students with meaningful opportunities to apply their academic knowledge to practical experiences in the workplaces. Work Integrated Learning includes internships, co-ops, and practicums. The goal of WIL opportunities is to help students acquire industry-specific and transferable skills, including communication, problem solving, teamwork, and leadership.

**Community-Engaged Learning (CEL):** Community-Engaged Learning is a type of scholarship whereby students actively engage with course content through the combination of collaboration with community organizations and facilitated reflection. Where WIL opportunities are separate from the classroom, CELs are often incorporated into course syllabi. In this way, students are able to engage with community stakeholders and gain real world experience, receiving a grade from their professor and/or course credit in return.

**Career Integrated Learning (CIL):** Career-Integrated Learning is a type of in-class learning that strives to help students (1) understand how what they are being taught in the classroom is applicable to their future careers and (2) learn to articulate the competencies they gained from their university education in order to (3) secure
employment or further graduate studies. Career-Integrated Learning is based on the idea that students should be made aware of how the competencies developed in-class are valuable for their future careers. By identifying and articulating the broader skills and attributes acquired through completion of a course, students can readily make a clear connection to the workplace.
Introduction & Overview

“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” - Confucius

In 2018, RBC conducted an assessment of 20,000 skills rankings across 300 occupations and 2.4 million expected job openings. In this assessment, they discovered an increasing demand from employers for foundational skills such as critical thinking, coordination, social perceptiveness, active listening and complex problem solving in their new hires. Furthermore, a 2014 survey by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives asked executives of 100 of Canada’s largest companies which qualities matter most in potential employees. They answered with “people skills” as number one, followed by communication skills, problem-solving skills, analytical abilities and leadership. In sixth place in the survey was industry-specific knowledge and experience. By creating a tangible connection between the classroom and the workplace, experiential learning programs not only give students the opportunity to develop the aforementioned soft-skills through actual experience applying them in the workplace, but also enable students to gain hands-on experience in their chosen field and teach students to articulate the connection between classroom learning and workplace competencies.

Broadly defined, experiential learning means to learn from the experience of doing. Experiential learning opportunities such as internships, co-ops, community engaged learning and job shadowing act as a complement to classroom learning. These opportunities are valuable as they encourage students to apply theoretical knowledge to real world environments. By stepping outside of the traditional classroom students learn how the community, industry and/or field experience influences their academic and personal development. Further, experiential education encourages students to reflect

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on their experience and how it helped in developing new competencies, attitudes and ways of thinking.³

When it comes time to find employment, graduates who have relevant work experience are ahead of their peers.⁴ The most recent National Graduates Survey released by Statistics Canada shows that bachelor’s level graduates with co-op experience earn more than their peers, have higher employment and full-time employment rates, and are more likely to report that their debt was paid off two years after graduation.

The USC’s mission statement is to “enhance the educational experience and quality of life for all undergraduates at Western University.” “Quality of life” is defined as life satisfaction, including everything from physical health, family education, employment, wealth, religious beliefs, and the environment. It is clear, then, that experiential learning opportunities being available to students would contribute to the achievement of both facets of this mission statement.

The University Students’ Council strives to identify areas in which the current Experiential Learning offerings at Western could be improved or expanded. As well as focusing on Experiential Learning holistically, this paper provides recommendations specific to Career Integrated Learning, Work Integrated Learning, Community Engaged Learning, study abroad opportunities, and external government programs.

This paper is intended to give comprehensive recommendations about post-secondary experiential learning for Western University and the Government of Ontario. The authors of this paper thought it was important to note that though this paper was created during the COVID-19 pandemic, the principles, concerns and recommendations outlined throughout the paper are relevant to students at all times. COVID-19 has exacerbated

many of the concerns listed in this paper, making the need for post-secondary experiential learning opportunities as relevant as ever.

General Experiential Learning Recommendations

A. Career Integrated Learning (CIL)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle: Students should understand and be able to articulate how their classroom education has prepared them for future career success.</th>
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<td>Principle: University classes should prepare students for their future careers.</td>
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<td>Principle: Bringing career resources into the classroom is one of the best ways to engage students.</td>
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<td>Principle: Students should be provided with in-class opportunities to learn skills that will help them achieve career and recruiting success.</td>
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<td>Concern: The way in which course learnings are applicable to real-world careers is often not made clear to students, leading to confusion and lack of motivation.</td>
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<td>Concern: There is currently no broad framework for integrating career readiness into a classroom setting.</td>
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<td>Concern: Students who have not been provided with CIL opportunities may be at a disadvantage when recruiting for work relative to students who have engaged in CIL.</td>
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<td>Recommendation: Western should implement Career Integrated Learning initiatives on campus across all faculties.</td>
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<td>Recommendation: The Careers &amp; Experience Department should work with faculty to identify opportunities for CIL to be incorporated into courses.</td>
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Career Integrated Learning (CIL) is a type of experiential learning focused on helping students identify and articulate the competencies that they gain from their university education in order to help students successfully transition into the world of work or further graduate studies. The foundation of CIL is the notion that students should be taught (1) how classroom learning translates into workplace competencies and (2) how those specific competencies can aid them in their future careers. By helping students learn to articulate the competencies gained from their university education and make
connections between those competencies and specific fields of work, CIL allows students to identify careers well-suited to their skillset and learn how to articulate the relevance of said skills in an interview setting. “In over 450 surveys delivered in classrooms during 2013 and 2014, seventy-two percent of students indicated that they found the identification of competencies helpful.”\(^5\) CIL clearly has the potential to help students by providing answers to the age-old student questions: “how will my school work help me in the real world?”

While the notion of a competency-based approach to career education is well-established, incorporating this type of learning into the classroom is less so.\(^6\) This idea is growing in popularity, as incorporating CIL into course curricula greatly increases the ability of the programming to reach a larger portion of the student population. Rather than putting the onus on students to 1) educate themselves on what resources are available and 2) seek out these resources on their own, incorporating CIL into the classroom allows students to access the benefits of CIL in a way that already fits into their schedule. In this way, the barriers to access CIL are greatly decreased.

Western can look to Memorial University\(^7\) for an implementation model, as it was the research of Ronda Joy and Rob Shea as part of the Career Integrated Learning Project at Memorial University that pioneered the thinking on CIL classroom integration. Without changing any aspect of curricula, faculty and career services at Memorial University identified the career competencies that existed in syllabi. These competencies were then introduced to students alongside the course content, and students were encouraged to reflect on the course learnings in relation to career opportunities throughout the semester. By reflecting, students make the connection between their university courses and the skills required to progress in life after university. While reflection is already a significant part of Work Integrated Learning programs, this project

\(^6\) Ibid
applies that concept from workplace and/or community based programs to the classroom setting.

For a more recent example, Western can look to Laurier, where CIL was incorporated into seven humanities and social science courses in the spring term of 2017. Or, for an example more close to home, Western can look to The School for Advanced Studies in the Arts and Humanities. This small program in Western’s Faculty of Arts & Humanities has incorporated CIL into its mandatory course for all third year students.

CIL at Western should be implemented through a centralized system to ensure that faculty are kept up to date with consistent information. At Western, The Careers & Experience Department is best positioned to act as this central project administrator, although this office doesn’t currently collaborate with faculty and course instructors nearly as much as it should. Staff members from The Careers & Experience Department should be given a mandate to engage with professors in order to help identify competencies in their current curricula. Furthermore, staff from The Careers & Experience Department should provide faculty with relevant information/resources that faculty could then refer students to if/when they are looking for work. If faculty members are updated frequently, they can highlight applicable work opportunities for their students. By having faculty on the same page, students will receive cohesive information, thereby reducing confusion.

While CIL has been implemented regularly into certain courses and programs, the presence of CIL modules varies widely across faculties and individual programs. The USC ultimately recommends CIL be implemented at Western across all programs because it bridges the gap between course learnings and career readiness. Students gain an understanding of how to use the course learnings in their careers as well as the ability to articulate these learnings to potential employers. Students of any faculty and

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program should graduate with an understanding of what their skills are, how to market themselves, and what their next steps are for securing employment.

**B. Opportunities for Non-Stem Students**

**Principle:** Students across all faculties should be able to access and benefit from volunteer, co-op, work, and internship opportunities in order to enhance and complement their academic learning.

**Principle:** Faculty should be actively engaged in the process of creating more experiential learning opportunities for students enrolled in non-STEM faculties.

**Concern:** Access to and the availability of experiential learning opportunities tends to be heavily concentrated in science, technology, engineering, and math-based programs.

**Concern:** Non-STEM programs often lack academically sanctioned co-curricular placements that enable students to learn in an immersive, stimulating environment, forcing students to turn to extra-curricular activities such as field trips, which come with additional costs.

**Concern:** Many students decline to pursue EL opportunities or pursue EL opportunities outside of their field of interest due to the lack of availability of an EL opportunity in their field.

**Recommendation:** Individual faculties and Western’s central Experiential Learning Team should continue to partner on the creation of an internship program for non-STEM students.

**Recommendation:** Western should continue to engage in deliberate outreach to local organizations to create more diverse experiential learning opportunities.

Having a robust experiential learning program can be of benefit to both students and their faculty of study. Ryerson University’s Learning and Teaching Office notes that “research has also identified certain groups of students that have the most to gain from experiential learning,” and that those groups include students who traditionally have not participated in internships. While “the first and foremost beneficiary of experiential learning is the student,” “experiential learning can help institutions stay relevant to
students by providing them with the necessary skills to transition to the workforce,” and “can also be a boon to departments with few resources.”

Currently, there are proportionally fewer experiential learning opportunities for non-STEM students than there are for STEM students at Western. As having participated in an Experiential Learning opportunity can be a competitive differentiator for students looking for full time employment, this puts certain faculties at an unfair disadvantage. Creating an internship program specifically for students enrolled in non-STEM faculties would allow the University to create a broader, more comprehensive experiential learning portfolio for non-STEM students. The robust nature of an organized program could allow for the appointment of a program lead tasked with creating partnerships with community organizations interested in securing liberal arts students for placements.

While Western’s Faculties of Engineering and Science offer year-round faculty-specific internship programs as part of their organizational structure, the same cannot be said for the Faculties of Arts and Humanities and Music. Other internationally respected institutions, including McGill University and the University of British Columbia (UBC), offer Faculty of Arts internship programs to their students, with UBC stating that internships for arts students can “show you what [an] arts degree can do” while providing valuable work experience, practical skill development and hands-on training, and opportunities to network.

Ontario Centres of Excellence’s TalentEdge program is another example of a robust internship program that does not exclude non-STEM students from consideration. TalentEdge provides current college and university undergraduate students in their final

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year of study to work on collaborative, industry-driven research and development projects. The program spans all disciplines, and fellowships may be academic or company-based.\textsuperscript{13}

Institutions and organizations across the country view internship placements, as a subset of experiential learning opportunity, as a critical component of academic and professional development for STEM and non-STEM students alike. The University Students’ Council believes that the creation of an expansive non-STEM internship program at Western would benefit the institution and carry hugely impactful benefits for all students pursuing arts degrees.

The USC recommends that Western engage in deliberate outreach to local organizations in order to create more diverse experiential learning opportunities. For example, in the Faculty of the Arts & Humanities, internships offered are typically in copy editing or journalism. A more diverse experiential learning program would include opportunities in other relevant fields, such as business communication, sales, creative management, advocacy, publishing, research, and the nonprofit space. By actively seeking to diversify available EL opportunities, Western will help support the students that have historically had to expend more energy than their peers by sourcing their own placements.

\textbf{C. Barriers to Accessibility (BIPOC & International Students)}

\textbf{Principle:} All students irrespective of financial ability and home faculty should be able to access and pursue EL opportunities.

\textbf{Principle:} EL opportunities should be made available in a broad range of fields in order to support students looking to pursue non-traditional career paths.

\textbf{Principle:} A centralized electronic database will allow for an efficacious method of compiling, monitoring, disseminating, and tracking positions and opportunities between faculties.

\textsuperscript{13} “TalentEdge Internship Program” OCE Ontario, last modified 28 February, 2019, https://www.oce-ontario.org/programs/archived-programs/talentedge/talentedge-internship-program
Concern: BIPOC students are disproportionately affected by financial instability and hiring-process discrimination.

Concern: Every country has unspoken etiquette rules with regards to job interviews and professional interaction, etiquette rules to which international students may not have been exposed.

Concern: Separate stewardship of opportunity clusters creates an environment where (1) access to certain opportunities is restricted to students of certain faculties, and (2) community partners lack a single gateway to experiential learning teams.

Recommendation: The University should allocate funds toward a targeted program for BIPOC and International students to support their ability to access experiential learning opportunities.

Recommendation: Western should allocate funding towards work-readiness programming for international students interested in pursuing WIL opportunities.

Recommendation: Experiential learning opportunities, including internships and co-ops, should be cross-listed and stored in a centrally-regulated database.

Although an internship, as an entry-level position, should never require prior work experience, this is nonetheless often the reality for paid, competitive internships. In order to be selected for these roles, a student must have completed at least one other internship prior to applying for the current role. Furthermore, oftentimes the internships that do not require prior work experience are unpaid. Thus, in order to secure competitive internships that serve as a stepping stone into a full time position, students must not only have secured an internship during a previous summer, but they likely must also have the financial stability needed to work an unpaid internship. For low-income students this is often not a possibility.

In 2018, the Business Council of Canada surveyed Canada’s 95 largest companies and identified that when evaluating and hiring candidates, the top five skills that employers look for in entry-level hires are collaboration, communication skills, problem-solving skills, leadership ability, and critical thinking.

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
skills, analytical capabilities, and resiliency\textsuperscript{17}. These soft skills are best developed in a WIL environment where students can grasp and develop both soft and technical skills concurrently making themselves more employable in the future. In fact, about 50\% of the companies surveyed identified that they are looking for about "1 year experience" in students when hiring for entry-level jobs and almost 30\% of all hires had previous WIL experience\textsuperscript{18}.

While EL opportunities are beneficial to those students who are able to participate, there are barriers to accessibility that disproportionately affect certain groups of students. For WIL opportunities specifically, students must be selected through the partner company's hiring process. However, there is often risk of systemic racism and unconscious bias in the hiring process that discriminates against BIPOC applicants.\textsuperscript{19} The standards of professionalism that are used to judge an applicant in an interview setting are ones which are connected to white supremacy.\textsuperscript{20} This includes expectations of white-coded behaviours and attitudes; standards of hair, clothing and communication patterns; and overall expectations of adhering to an organization's "culture fit."\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, there is a well documented phenomena of unconscious bias in hiring wherein the hiring manager will hire the candidate that looks/acts the most like themself.\textsuperscript{22} Taking into account that BIPOC are consistently underrepresented in senior leadership positions,\textsuperscript{23} it is clear that BIPOC students face specific recruiting challenges that other students do not.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid
\textsuperscript{19} Tingling, Jodi. “Supporting the careers of individuals who are black, indigenous, and people of colour,” CERIC, published 6 October, 2020, \url{https://ceric.ca/2020/10/supporting-the-careers-of-individuals-who-are-black-indigenous-and-people-of-colour/}
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid
\textsuperscript{23} Tingling, Jodi. “Supporting the careers of individuals who are black, indigenous, and people of colour,” CERIC, published 6 October, 2020, \url{https://ceric.ca/2020/10/supporting-the-careers-of-individuals-who-are-black-indigenous-and-people-of-colour/}
In addition to discriminatory hiring practices, in every country there are unspoken etiquette rules that are used to judge successful candidates in interviews that are connected to the culture of that country. International students may not have been exposed to these etiquette rules prior to coming to Canada and thus may struggle in the recruiting process in ways a local student may not.

In order to ensure that every student is given an equal chance to succeed, the USC recommends that Western address the barriers that BIPOC and International students face by allocating funds towards career programming for BIPOC and International students.

This could look like allocating funds towards bringing in BIPOC alumni in order to match them with students interested in their field, organizing industry panels, and organizing diversity recruiting events where BIPOC recruiters can come to campus and meet BIPOC students looking for employment. This could also look like a fund that provides compensation to students should they want to pursue an unpaid opportunity but are unable to afford to do so. Finally, this could look like allocating funds towards the creation of more Work-Study programs specifically for BIPOC students.

The USC further recommends that Western continue to allocate funding toward work-readiness programming for international students in order to help bridge the knowledge gap and ensure that all students are on an even playing field. This includes training on Canadian business practices, resume creation, and interview preparation workshops. Furthermore, these services should be more proactively promoted to international students, including via social media. Lastly, as international students are likely to deal with unconscious bias in the networking/interview process, the University should help connect international students with Western international student alumni for networking/mentorship purposes. The University should partner with target firms to organize networking opportunities and/or diversity recruiting pathways for international students in order to ensure more equitable networking and hiring practices are achieved.
Western lacks a central database through which students can access all freely available internships that are processed through faculty offices and count for academic credit. While other pieces of infrastructure give students a measure of access to job opportunities posted by community partners, the current system places non-STEM students in faculties without internship offices at a disadvantage. For example, students with credible transferable skills in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities are denied access to internship providers who list their opportunities with another faculty (such as Information and Media Studies) as opposed to on Western’s universally accessible employment portal, WesternConnect.

Furthermore, multiple possible points of contact makes it more difficult 1) for community partners to know who to contact if they are looking to set up a student placement, and 2) for Western to effectively manage relationships with community partners. A more streamlined system will make the building and maintaining of community partnerships much more efficient.

The University of Waterloo has successfully adopted a centralized database for summer, volunteer, parttime and full-time co-op placements. JobMine allows students to login, input their personal information, and access placements based on criteria they choose. This JobMine portal also stores the student’s resume and cover letter to facilitate the application process.24

**Work Integrated Learning (WIL)**

**Principle:** All students irrespective of financial ability and home faculty should be able to access and pursue WIL opportunities.

**Principle:** Students should never be put in a position where it is necessary to choose between the quality of their education and financial stability.

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Concern: Unpaid WIL opportunities restrict a student’s capacity to earn income that might be necessary in order to pay tuition, fees, and living expenses.

Concern: When only unpaid WIL opportunities are available, students who rely on summer and academic-year work income must sacrifice the quality of their education in favour of financial stability.

Concern: Access to and the availability of paid experiential learning opportunities is not equal across all faculties.

Concern: Some programs have mandatory WIL components with unpaid WIL opportunities available, potentially forcing students into a financially unstable position.

Recommendation: Western should ensure that all WIL partners compensate students for their labour.

Recommendation: Paid WIL opportunities should be offered equally, proportionate to the number of students, across all faculties.

In June of 2016, "The Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel" released its report outlining Ontario's strategy to meet the dynamic needs of the economy. The report identified expanding opportunities for learning as a key recommendation. The report recommends that all post secondary students complete at least one experiential learning opportunity before graduating university.25 In addition, the Canadian organization known as The Business/Higher Education Roundtable (BHER), established by the Business Council of Canada, has set a national goal to ensure that 100% of Canadian post secondary students have the opportunity from some sort of meaningful WIL opportunity prior to graduation26.

It is clear that participation in a WIL opportunity can be a very beneficial experience for a student. However, for many students, financial need is a barrier to their ability to participate in WIL opportunities. Some faculties at Western currently offer unpaid WIL opportunities. Students who rely on work income to offset their living expenses cannot

afford to pursue these opportunities, putting them at a disadvantage to their peers. This is especially true for faculties like Arts & Humanities, where many internships in relevant fields for students are unpaid. This leads to students who can afford to work for free being able to gain significant resume experience, giving them an unfair advantage over other students when recruiting in that field.

Out of 332 respondents, 66.6% of students indicated that they rely on summer earnings to pay for post-secondary education. Students have been raising concerns about the lack of paid internships, co-ops, and practicums available -- particularly students in Arts faculties. Meaningful work experience should be accessible to all students regardless of faculty. With the costs of tuition, textbooks and rent being a burden on students as well as the current job market being highly competitive, it is crucial that all students not only have access to opportunities that will provide financial support but also have access to the professional development that will help give Western students a competitive edge.

In order to ensure that Western students do not have to sacrifice the quality of their education for the sake of financial stability, the University Students’ Council recommends that Western ensure all WIL partners financially compensate students for their labour by outlining this as a priority when engaging external partners. The USC further recommends that Western strive to ensure that these WIL opportunities are available across all faculties by actively seeking out community WIL partnerships in a variety of fields.

**Principle:** WIL opportunities are an excellent way for students to make connections in their industry of choice, build workplace competencies, and gain resume experience.

**Principle:** The primary goal of all WIL opportunities should be to provide experiences that students value and feel are worthwhile/effective learning opportunities

**Principle:** All stakeholders, including students and community partners, should be in agreement about the scope and learning objectives of the WIL opportunity.

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**Concern:** Many students are unaware of the WIL opportunities available to them and/or how to access these opportunities.

**Concern:** There are few WIL opportunities for students not pursuing mainstream career paths.

**Recommendation:** Western should create a targeted WIL promotional campaign to ensure that all students are aware of what WIL opportunities are available to them and how they can be accessed.

**Recommendation:** Western should create WIL opportunities related to a student’s interests and area of study.

**Recommendation:** Faculties offering WIL opportunities should consult with students to identify industries, types, and locations of WIL opportunities that their students would be interested in pursuing.

**Recommendation:** Faculties offering WIL opportunities should collect feedback from students on their WIL experiences and make improvements to WIL offerings as appropriate.

**Recommendation:** Expectations of a WIL experience -- including learning outcomes, workplace responsibilities, deliverables, and professional conduct -- should be agreed upon by all parties prior to a student starting the WIL process.

WIL opportunities have significant value for students, allowing them the opportunity to build a network in their chosen field, achieve professional development, and gain relevant industry experience. However, many students are unaware of the WIL opportunities that Western offers and/or how to access these opportunities. To ensure that as many students as possible are made aware of the WIL opportunities available to them, the USC recommends Western create a targeted WIL promotional campaign. This campaign would teach students what WIL opportunities are available to them and how they can access further information.

In the 2019 University and College Applicant Survey, it was found that the primary motivation students have for pursuing post-secondary education is the desire to obtain
employment in their chosen field. However, in a 2018 USC survey, 49% of students stated that their current employment does not reflect their desired field of work and attributed this to the lack of opportunities available to them. In order to succeed in helping students achieve their post-graduation employment goals (and thus feel that their university education was a worthwhile investment), Western must continue to strive to help students find WIL opportunities in their chosen fields.

The USC recommends that Western continue to increase its number of WIL partnerships. Western should determine which organizations are targeted for WIL partnerships based on what fields/type of work students indicate they are interested in pursuing. Furthermore, as WIL opportunity creation is achieved at a faculty level, the USC recommends that faculties regularly collect feedback from students to determine where their interests lie with regards to potential WIL opportunities and make improvements to WIL offerings as appropriate. This will ensure that the WIL opportunities provided are as relevant and beneficial to students as possible. This compliments the USC’s recommendation to centralize this information in a publicly-accessible database such as Western Connect. By allowing students to gain a better understanding of the WIL opportunities available to them as they are expanded over time based on the experiences of their peers, Western can ensure the most high-quality and impactful experiences are being offered. This will also make the process of identifying relevant WIL opportunities much easier for double majors and affiliates.

The USC further recommends that faculties ensure that the learning outcomes, workplace responsibilities, deliverables, and professional conduct expected of a student participating in a WIL are outlined clearly and agreed upon by all parties prior to starting the WIL process. This will ensure that all stakeholders are able to manage their expectations early on and will prevent confusion and misunderstanding.

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Principle: WIL opportunities are an attractive feature of a university course for students.

Principle: Students should be made aware of which courses have WIL components so as to be able to make well-informed course selection decisions.

Concern: Some WIL opportunities are not made visible to students until after course registration.

Recommendation: When applying to internships and co-op programs through WesternConnect, students should be able to view positions and job descriptions of currently available positions before being asked to register for the internship/co-op course.

Recommendation: Western should clearly identify courses with WIL components on Student Central for students to view when selecting courses during course registration.

The 2015 National Graduates Survey released by Statistics Canada shows that bachelor’s level graduates with co-op experience earn more than their peers, have higher part-time and full-time employment rates, and are more likely to report that their debt was paid off two years after graduation. In this way, it is clear that WIL opportunities are very desirable for students.

Currently, at Western, students can register for Internship and Co-op programs through the new WesternConnect website. Students, however, have raised concerns about the variation in depth of information given by faculty. Although some faculties such as Social Science and Arts and Humanities include examples of the types of past placements as well as current internship titles, there is no guarantee that these same companies are still accepting applicants, nor does Western offer an explanation of the

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32 Western Arts & Humanities. N.d. “FAQs” https://www.uwo.ca/arts/current_students/internships/info_for_students/faq.html
roles and responsibilities of each internship/co-op opportunity. As the process for applying for internships/co-ops can be long and bureaucratic, increased transparency prior to applying for internship/co-op courses would make it easier for students to decide whether or not they should apply and could help build excitement about participating in WIL. The USC therefore recommends that Western ensure that all faculties post the job descriptions and application timelines of all currently available positions prior to when students must register for the internship/co-op course. This will allow students to determine if pursuing a WIL opportunity is worthwhile for them prior to beginning the application process and will give students the opportunity to begin planning for any associated financial costs.

Community Engaged Learning (CEL)

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<th>Principle: CEL opportunities are an attractive feature of a university course for students.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principle: All degree programs should provide students with the opportunity to engage with real-world issues in their field of choice prior to graduation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concern: Some programs do not provide CEL opportunities for students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation: Western should clearly identify courses with CEL components on Student Central for students to view when selecting courses during course registration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation: Western should incentivize the creation of courses that incorporate an CEL component</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation: Western should commit to having a Community Engaged Learning component in 100% of its programs offered by 2025</td>
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</table>

Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) is a type of scholarship whereby students actively engage with course content through the combination of collaboration with community organizations and facilitated reflection. CEL opportunities allow students to gain hands-on experience that will aid in building a strong resume, build meaningful connections with local and international communities, learn how classroom learnings
apply to real-world situations, develop critical thinking skills, develop an understanding of diverse cultures and communities, improve transferable skills (ie. communication, teambuilding, problem-solving) and more. In this way, CELs have the potential to benefit students across all faculties at Western.

The University Students' Council recommends that Western ensure that all course listings indicate whether or not there is a CEL component for that course prior to registration. A course having a CEL component is desirable for many students; knowing which courses offer this type of learning opportunity may affect a students’ course selection decisions greatly.

Furthermore, the USC recommends that Western commit to having a CEL component in 100% of its programs offered in 2025. Western should incentivize the incorporation of CEL into all new courses and should work with faculty to help them build CEL into existing curricula. For support in implementation, Western should continue to work with CityStudio, a local project that helps match professors to community partners in order to establish valuable CEL opportunities for students. CityStudio has partnered with many Western and Fanshawe professors since its 2019 inception in London. Additionally, Western’s Careers & Experience office should develop resources and establish additional partnerships to support instructors looking to incorporate CEL components into existing as well as new courses. CEL opportunities should be made available to all programs equally, and students should be encouraged to pursue CEL courses in other disciplines wherever possible.

Study Abroad Opportunities

**Principle:** Impact Experience (formerly Alternative Spring Break) provides a valuable experiential learning opportunity to students

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The Impact Experience (formerly Alternative Spring Break) program is one of the community engaged learning programs available to students at Western. It gives students the opportunity to engage in meaningful community based service while supporting their academic learning and personal development.

This program is a great example of how students can engage with experiential learning opportunities that will complement their degrees.

Prior to the 2017 Western Senate’s decision to approve a full fall reading week, only two study days were provided to students. However, as Western students are now given a full fall reading week, the USC recommends that the Impact Experience program be expanded to include fall reading week so as to ensure that as many students can participate as possible.

In the past, there have been some concerns that Impact Experience trips incorporate elements of white saviourship. As Impact Experience continues to rebrand, it should

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**Principle:** All students irrespective of faculty should have the option to participate in a study abroad opportunity.

**Concern:** Impact Experience opportunities are only offered during the winter semester reading week, despite the implementation of a fall reading week at Western in 2017.

**Concern:** Some faculties structure their programs in a way that does not allow for a study abroad opportunity due to the distribution of mandatory courses.

**Recommendation:** Impact Experience should be expanded to include opportunities during the fall reading week.

**Recommendation:** Programs that do not allow for study abroad opportunities should be re-evaluated to allow for the possibility of a semester abroad. If this is not possible, Canadian alternatives should be made available.

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emphasize the importance of cultural exchange, respect for the leadership of other communities, and the providing of support that is both wanted and sustainable/beneficial for the local community/economy. Impact Experience should continue to ensure that all trips reflect these principles.

In addition to Impact Experience, Western offers a variety of longer exchange opportunities to students. While some Western programs are structured in such a way as to encourage students to participate in a semester abroad, other programs, notably in Music and STEM faculties, have structures that make it extremely difficult to travel abroad and still meet all program requirements without delaying graduation.

According to a study conducted by CNBC, 41% of employers are more likely to offer a higher salary if you have studied abroad. Furthermore, 29% of surveyed employers indicated that whether or not a student has studied abroad is a factor they consider when hiring graduates, and 23% indicated that they are more likely to hire a recent graduate that has lived or traveled abroad over another candidate with equal academic qualifications. Thus, it is clear that participation in Western’s exchange program can be of significant benefit to students and that a lack of exchange experience could be a competitive disadvantage. The USC recommends that Western re-evaluate all programs that do not currently allow for exchange to ensure that all students are able to study abroad, should they want to. If possible, programs should re-structure to allow for participation in Western’s existing study abroad opportunities. If this is not possible, Western should develop opportunities for these specific programs that will allow for study abroad within the existing program structure. If studying abroad is not possible, similar Canadian opportunities should be sourced.

Im, Jimmy. “Survey: 41% of employers more likely to offer higher salary if you’ve studied abroad -- here are the 5 most impressive cities,” CNBC, last modified 20 September, 2018, https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/20/survey-employers-more-likely-to-offer-higher-salary-with-study-abroad.html

Ibid
Government Programs (External)

**Principle:** Postsecondary students deserve work-integrated learning opportunities.

**Principle:** Work-integrated learning opportunities should cater to all students equitably, regardless of their background.

**Concern:** Many postsecondary students find difficulty in securing work-integrated learning opportunities.

**Concern:** Barriers to accessing work integrated learning, including distance, location, financial constraints, undergraduate program, and physical, social, and mental challenges, exist for many students.

**Concern:** International students are not included in current government financial incentivization for work-integrated learning.

**Recommendation:** The Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion should extend all of the current flexibility measures for the Student Work Placement Program (SWPP), such as allowing participants to work from home, shortened work terms being eligible for the program, and removing net new hirings for participating organizations.

**Recommendation:** The Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion should provide $20 million in additional funding to the Student Work Placement Program (SWPP) to create additional placements for both international and domestic students.

**Recommendation:** As recommended by Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada, the Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion should improve the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program by extending current flexibility measures. This includes increasing funding by $180 million per year for two years, increasing funding and length for each experience, and removing the age limits of the program so all registered students can participate.

**Recommendation:** As recommended by Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada, the Ministry of Employment, Workforce
Many Ontarians are struggling to find meaningful work experiences, particularly ones that utilize the skills and knowledge they have acquired through their postsecondary education. A dwindling youth labour market not only impacts a student's future prospects upon graduation, but also has negative consequences associated with their current educational experience.

To help address the concern that postsecondary students find it difficult to secure WIL opportunities, the Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion should extend all of the current flexibility measures for the Student Work Placement Program (SWPP) until mid 2023. Flexibility measures include the removal of net new hirings (a maximum threshold of hirings) at organizations that participate in the program, wage subsidies for WIL students hired by companies, flexibility to postpone

Recommendation: The Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion should provide $25 million per year to support access to technology for work-integrated learning opportunities.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion should conduct a formalized review of federal legislation, regulations, and guidelines which create barriers towards participation in work-integrated learning, focusing on international students, BIPOC students, and students not in STEM.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship should amend Express Entry pathways so that summer employment and co-op placements count towards the Canadian Experience Class in gaining permanent residency.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion should support and specifically designate projects aimed at international students when allocating funding from the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Colleges and Universities should allow international students to participate in the Career Ready Fund.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Colleges and Universities should expand the Career Ready Fund to emphasize non-STEM work-integrated learning opportunities, such as those related to the arts and humanities.

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placement start dates to avoid rescinding placements, and the ability for WIL students to work from home. Greater flexibility not only allows more students to engage in SWPP, but also affords necessary leeway for participating organizations, in turn augmenting buy-in to the program.

Additionally, the Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion should provide $20 million in additional funding to SWPP in order to create new WIL placements for both international and domestic students. Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada data has indicated a continued downward trend for student employment, with an approximately 25% decrease in WIL opportunities for the 2020 fall term. This trend is expected to continue for the next several years as a result of COVID-19, demonstrating an ongoing need for heightened investment in important WIL programs. The above recommendation aligns with Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada’s asks prior to the 2021 federal budget.

In conjunction with the lack of WIL opportunities available to students, significant barriers exist for those attempting to find employment. These barriers make it even harder for disadvantaged students to partake in these experiences. A 2016 survey conducted by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) found that financial limitations are amongst the top three challenges. As such, students find it difficult to access WIL opportunities.

To help address this concern, as recommended by CEWIL Canada, the Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion should improve the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program by extending current flexibility measures: increasing funding by $180 million per year, increasing funding and length for each experience, and removing the age limits of the program so all registered students can participate. It is anticipated that the increased investment will provide approximately 30,000 new student jobs, while allowing not-for-profit and small to medium sized businesses to benefit from student placements year round.

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45 Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada, Written Submission, 3.
While WIL opportunities have declined recently, many organizations support students through remote WIL experiences. To ensure the efficacy of remote WIL experiences, adequate technology is required. As CEWIL points out, for small to medium sized businesses, the costs of obtaining additional hardware and software to accommodate online WIL students are prohibitive. According to a study conducted by the University of Waterloo, a number of students felt that the switch to remote working impacted their productivity, especially when they consistently experienced login and virtual private network (VPN) difficulties and internet connectivity issues. To alleviate these problems, students require additional technology support. Therefore, as recommended by Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada, the Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion should provide $25 million per year to support access to technology for WIL through institutional envelope funding.

Moreover, international students faced a number of barriers in accessing WIL, including lack of understanding of workplace culture, English language competency, concerns about employer attitudes and perceptions, and their legal ability to work in Canada. While the government of Canada has supported WIL (specifically co-ops and internships) through the Student Work Placement Program, employers cannot access these programs when hiring international students. Similarly, students facing physical, mental health, and/or social barriers needed additional government-based assistance to identify WIL opportunities that accurately match their abilities, making it harder to pursue these engagements on their own.

In addition to the recommendations aimed at alleviating university-based barriers, the Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion conduct a formalized review of federal legislation, regulations, and guidelines which create barriers towards participation in WIL, focusing on international students, BIPOC students, and students not in STEM. Although not directly evident, federal legislation, regulations, and guidelines can inadvertently create barriers for certain segments of the student population. For instance, time limits on postsecondary education completion for students who receive Band funding may unintentionally prevent Indigenous students

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46 Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada, Written Submission, 3.
48 Malatest, Barriers to Work-integrated, 13.
50 Malatest, Barriers to Work-integrated, 13.
from participating in WIL as WIL extends the time it takes to complete a degree\textsuperscript{51}. Additionally, the need for a separate co-op work permit and the fact that work authorization for WIL experiences must be included as part of a student’s study permit can hamper the ability for international students to wholly participate in WIL programs. According to the Canadian Bureau of International Education, 51\% of international students plan on applying for permanent residence in Canada\textsuperscript{52}. Extending eligibility for federal WIL programs and granting authorization for WIL activities to international students will increase their chances of gaining valuable Canadian work experience, which can positively contribute to their endeavour to obtain permanent residency. Therefore, the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship should amend Express Entry pathways so that summer employment and co-op placements count towards the Canadian Experience Class in gaining permanent residency.

The Youth Employment and Skills Strategy is an important and necessary commitment to help postsecondary students attain meaningful employment experiences. While this is certainly a step in the right direction, it is important that the government support international students too. Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Employment, Workforce Development, and Disability Inclusion support and specifically designate projects aimed at international students when allocating funding from the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy. International student tuition is typically four times greater than domestic student tuition\textsuperscript{53}. As such, it is crucial that government programs ensure international students are afforded ample work opportunities to maximize their education.

The Career Ready Fund is another program that financially assists postsecondary institutions, employers, and other organizations to create experiential learning opportunities for students\textsuperscript{54}. As of 2020, the Career Ready Fund is only open to Canadian students, permanent residents, or refugees with the right to work in Canada\textsuperscript{55}. International students are vital members of the Ontario economy, contributing new perspectives and skills. The Ministry of Colleges and Universities should amend the Career Ready Fund to include international student WIL opportunities.

\textsuperscript{55} "Career Ready," Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities.
The performance-based funding (PBF) system for universities proposed by the provincial government further reinforces barriers, making it particularly difficult for non-STEM disciplines to secure funding for WIL and research, dwindling the number of opportunities for those enrolled in arts-based programs. Metric #8 focuses on the amount of federal Tri-Agency funding secured; however, a lot of research within the arts and humanities does not rely on these funding sources. Tri-Agency funding is funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Because these agencies do not provide significant funding relating to non-STEM disciplines, it becomes difficult to create an incentive-compatible way to augment non-STEM focused WIL opportunities for students.

In addition to the PBF system proposed by the provincial government, the Career Ready Fund (mentioned above) does not focus on the arts and humanities. Instead, the Career Ready Fund focuses predominantly on technology based roles, such as digital marketing and data analytics. While the Career Ready Fund is an important program to preserve, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities should expand the fund to focus more on non-STEM WIL opportunities. These disciplines are important contributors to the economy and should have opportunities commensurate to STEM-focused programs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, experiential learning is an important component of a student’s educational experience. Experiential learning opportunities, specifically WIL, CIL, CEL, and study-abroad terms, not only expose students to the real-world applicability of classroom teachings, but enable them to develop transferable skills that relate to all facets of life. Therefore, it is imperative that Western University and the provincial and federal government support the vast array of experiential learning initiatives. After all, an investment in students is an investment in the future.


57 "Career Ready," Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities.