Accessible work-integrated learning experiences: An analysis of the University of Victoria's CanWork program

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The University of Victoria, Canada, strives to enhance undergraduate students' labor market readiness through work-integrated learning (WIL) experiences. Students with disabilities have historically encountered low participation and success rates in WIL, potentially resulting in their under-representation in the post-graduation labor market. To address this issue, the CanWork program was created, aimed at eliminating participation barriers in co-operative education for students with disabilities. The program offered tailored support, including job development, one-on-one guidance at all stages, and the removal of grade point average (GPA) thresholds. As of its completion in September 2022, the CanWork program facilitated pre-employment training for 107 students with disabilities and 84 co-op work placements. Demographic-specific and personalized support mechanisms boosted participation and success rates for students with disabilities in work-integrated learning. Furthermore, an analysis of program data highlights that GPA requirements in well-resourced programs create unnecessary barriers for students with disabilities.

Keywords: Accessibility, inclusion, disabilities, co-operative education, work-integrated learning

The University of Victoria (UVic), Canada, through Co-operative Education and Career Services (Co-op and Career), offers a comprehensive co-operative education program (UVic Co-op and Career, 2022b) that is nationally accredited by Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL, 2021). Co-operative education is offered to students in all nine of UVic's undergraduate academic faculties and is the cornerstone of UVic's work-integrated learning (WIL) offerings. In Canada, co-op work terms include a minimum of 420 hours of paid work and are typically completed through full-time employment over a single, four-month semester. While co-operative education is mandatory for undergraduate students in Engineering and Business, it is optional for undergraduate students in Humanities, Fine Arts, Social Sciences, Science, and Computer Science. In these optional co-op programs, students must apply to their faculty-based co-op program, meet minimum grade point average (GPA) requirements, complete a pre-requisite course, and be studying full-time in their academic programs. Both the typical length and structure of a co-op work term and the GPA requirements have the potential to limit the participation and success of students with disabilities in co-operative education. This constraint has been identified as a problem in the broader WIL literature (see, e.g., Gatto et al., 2021b).

In 2020, Co-op and Career partnered with CanAssist to create a new WIL program designed to support students with disabilities and mental health challenges to secure and retain paid degree-related work experience through co-op. CanAssist is a unique UVic-based organization dedicated to increasing independence and improving the quality of life of individuals living with a range of cognitive, physical, and mental health challenges through technology development and employment programming (CanAssist, 2020a). This paper reports on an analysis of data gathered from participating students over the life of the two-year program and discusses to what extent the program supported the removal of barriers to participation for students with accessibility needs and what features of the program

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contributed to its success. The program and findings from the review may serve to inform other post-secondary institutional efforts to remove barriers to WIL for learners with disabilities and/or mental health challenges.

Accessible Work-Integrated Learning: A Review of the Literature

In 2017, one in five Canadians (22%) reported living with a disability (Morris et al., 2018). According to the Canadian Survey on Disabilities, persons with disabilities experience lower rates of employment than those without. For example, for persons aged 25–64 years, three in five (59%) persons with disabilities were employed versus four in five (80%) persons without (Morris et al., 2018). This discrepancy in employment outcomes persists regardless of the obtainment of an undergraduate degree, with research indicating that upon graduation, students with disabilities are under-represented in the workforce (Morris et al., 2018). Further, a longitudinal analysis of the 2005 cohort of Canadian university graduates with disabilities demonstrates that the presence of a disability has a negative impact on an individual's earnings and employment status (Zarifa et al., 2015).

Moriña and Biagiotti (2022), in a thematic analysis of 18 international articles on the transition to employment for graduates with a disability, conclude that regardless of the progress society has made in promoting accessibility and inclusion, inequalities persist. Further exacerbating the imbalance between graduates with a disability and those without, is that only 23% of students who have registered with a Disability Services Office for academic accommodations at a Canadian university or college have engaged in WIL (Gatto et al., 2021a). While research suggests that WIL helps students build confidence and attain goals, and possibly to set and achieve goals once in the workforce (see, e.g., Purdie et al., 2013), students with disabilities tend to miss out on these experiences and the associated benefits. As noted in the Employment Accessibility Resource Network Report (2019), a lack of work experience among post-secondary graduates with disabilities is one of the biggest barriers to employment.

Based on a review of 55 Canadian universities and colleges, Gatto et al. (2021a) observed that 40% have no reference to disability services for any career-related activities. Additionally, only 18% refer to disability supports specifically for WIL programs. While conducted on a small scale and based on a single university, Gatto et al. (2021a) found that among students with disabilities registered with the University of Guelph's Disabilities Services Office, 50% somewhat agreed that their disability was a factor in self-selecting out of voluntary WIL programs. The same survey also found that having a mental health disorder significantly reduced the likelihood of engaging in WIL. Study participants identified a lack of understanding of the WIL accommodations they might need and a reluctance to disclose their disability to a prospective employer as the main barriers to WIL participation. Dollinger et al. (2023) also report challenges students face with disclosure and engagement with WIL. While more research on this topic is required, the need for disability-specific supports in WIL is clearly indicated and is an important factor in addressing the disparity in employment between graduates with a disability and their non-disabled peers.

UVIC'S CANWORK: DESCRIPTION OF THE PILOT PROGRAM

As part of the British Colombia Co-op and Work-Integrated Learning Initiative (COWIL) funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training (BC Gov News, 2021), now the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, Co-op and Career, in partnership with CanAssist, developed a new program called CanWork to support students with disabilities and mental health challenges to successfully secure and retain paid degree-related WIL placements. The program

was extended for a second year through continued COWIL and Government of Canada Opportunities funding (Government of Canada, 2023).

CanWork focused on support for students in co-operative education and was modeled on CanAssist's former TeenWork program, now merged under the Job Journey program (CanAssist, 2020b). TeenWork is an innovative youth employment program designed to assist youth with disabilities (aged 15-19) in finding and retaining meaningful paid part-time employment while attending high school and nearing the transition to adulthood. Key attributes of the TeenWork program that were incorporated into CanWork include providing strong pre-employment preparation through the Discovery process and establishing a one-on-one job coaching relationship that provides continuous support throughout pre-employment to job retention. According to the US-based National Disability Institute (2021), Discovery supports participants in identifying their vocational strengths, preferred work environments, and rights and responsibilities in the labor market. Discovery also resonates with career development theory (Krumboltz, 1994; Savickas, 2005), particularly the hope-action theory (Niles et al., 2011, 2020), with its emphasis on self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal-setting and planning, implementing, and adapting in generating the necessary confidence to engage and succeed in career exploration and development.

In the early stages of planning the CanWork program, invitations to participate in the stakeholder group were sent to undergraduate students participating in optional co-op programs. While students with disabilities were the focus for feedback, students with a strong interest in supporting disability rights were also invited to contribute. Despite providing incentives and marketing the call for participation through the UVic Society for Students with a Disability, none of the participants in the 12-member stakeholder group identified as having a disability or mental health challenge. It is highly likely that the acute stress of the COVID-19 lockdown and the resulting disengagement from educational programs had a disproportionate effect on vulnerable students (Whitley et al., 2021). Nonetheless, the stakeholder group's feedback resulted in useful recommendations that informed the development of the CanWork program. The main recommendation regarding program admission was to re-examine criteria on minimum grade point average (GPA). Other recommendations related to the pre-employment curriculum and the support during co-op work terms (Table 1).

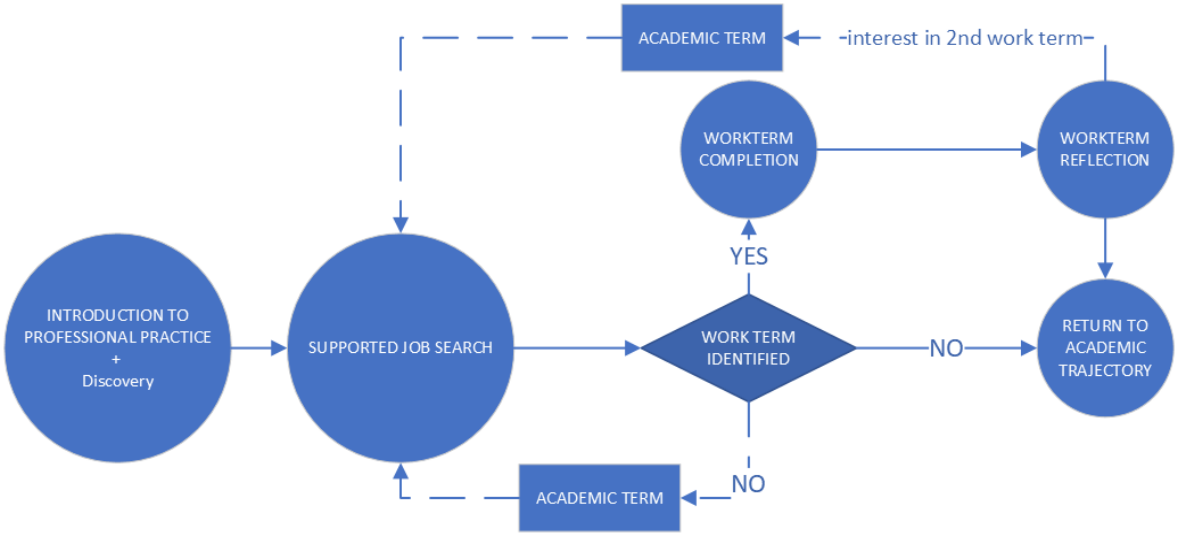
TABLE 1: Recommendations for pre-employment and work term support for CanWork.

Pre-employment curriculum	**Work term support**
• Use plain language • Explore flexible assignment deadlines • Provide individual support • Create a hybrid learning environment • Record live workshops to support asynchronous access	• Identify employers who value diversity and unique perspectives • Provide on-the-job support • Consider flexible work arrangements • Reduce minimum co-op term hours and provide a part-time work option

After further consultation with key campus partners (e.g., Centre for Accessible Learning, Office of Student Life, and Academic Advising), the CanWork program was developed and implemented by a working group comprised of staff from Co-op and Career and CanAssist. To limit the scope of the initiative, the program focused on supporting undergraduate students in programs where co-operative education was optional (UVic Co-op and Career, 2022a). While students were supported by job coaches from CanAssist instead of by co-op coordinators in Co-op and Career, the CanWork program mimicked the established co-operative education curriculum and pre-employment development model provided

to all UVic co-op students, as presented in the process flow chart below, created for clarity to the reader of this journal (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Curriculum, pre-employment, and work placement model for CanWork.



The course Introduction to Professional Practice, a mandatory co-op preparation course for all UVic students participating in co-operative education (available for 2nd year students and above), was adapted for the CanWork program. Subsequently, all CanWork students completed this course. The Discovery module, tailored for students who identify as having a disability, was developed specifically for the Professional Practice course for the CanWork program. Once students had submitted a résumé and cover letter assignment in the co-op preparation course, they were considered ready to engage in job seeking and were granted access to the co-op jobs portal. Four job coaches, one employment and community developer, and one program coordinator, provided support through all stages of the CanWork program. Job coaches checked in regularly to ensure students felt supported and accountable in their job search process. The job search stage was based on the principle of self-autonomy and was informed by four key reflective questions: What do you love? What are you great at? What does the world need? What can you be paid for? (Andrews & Ramji, 2021). Once students had obtained a co-op placement, the job coaches continued supporting them by conducting bi-weekly check-ins, engaging students in reflection on their skill development, and discussing any challenges they had encountered in the workplace. Despite the support in place, most students chose not to disclose to their employers their participation in the CanWork program. This reluctance speaks to the ongoing fear of stigma that persons with disabilities experience in the workplace (Lindsay et al., 2019). In cases where students did not obtain a co-op placement for the term following their completion of the Introduction to Professional Practice course, they were provided with the option to continue searching for a placement in a later term or to withdraw from the program and return to their regular academic schedule.

In line with the stakeholders' recommendation, CanWork students were allowed to complete shorter co-op work terms. The normal minimum length of a co-op work term is 420 hours, while the CanWork students had to complete a minimum of 315 hours, removing a potential barrier for some program participants for whom full-time work poses undue hardship due to the nature of their disability and/or

mental health challenge. Additionally, greater flexibility was provided for assignment deadlines. Finally, CanWork's employment development officer provided information to employers about accessible workplace practices, helping to support the pilot program participants and encourage broader social change in the workplace.

THE DISCOVERY UNIT: SUPPORTING ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION IN WIL CURRICULUM

To further provide students with self-advocacy information, a Discovery module was added to the pre-employment course. The Discovery module is based on the TeenWork curriculum and on the Principles of Guided Group Discovery developed by the US National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities (LEAD, 2017). This unit focused on equipping participants with insights on their strengths and capacities while additionally providing disability-related labor market information and advocacy skills. The Discovery unit covered:

- Support networks,
- Rights and responsibilities,
- Disclosure in the workplace, and
- Accommodation in the workplace.

Through guided virtual group discussions, students were supported in self-reflection to identify ideal work environments and strength-based disclosure strategies within an engaging learning environment with peers who identified as having a disability and/or mental health challenge. These discussions were designed to support learners to improve self-advocacy skills and gain an awareness of the importance of self-disclosure (Lindsay et al., 2018b). Finally, after attending lectures relating to the Discovery module, students completed the CanWork Discovery Summary, a reflective assignment intended to support individuals to apply the attained knowledge to their own situation. The assignment called on learners to reflect on their intention to self-disclose (or not) to their employer and to anticipate what that process might look like for them. For example, if they intended to disclose their disability, they were asked to consider their rationale for disclosing, along with when and how to disclose in the job search and recruitment process. Similarly, if they intended not to disclose, they were asked to reflect on their rationale for that decision in addition to the pros and cons. Additionally, participants were asked to reflect on whether, when, and how they might request workplace accommodations. Participants who opted not to request workplace accommodations were prompted to identify strategies that might support their success in the workplace, for example, using a personal planner, software applications like Trello or Asana, etc. Finally, students were asked to explore their ideal work environments and to identify workplace characteristics that might be most conducive to their success in co-op.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The following sections of the paper discuss quantitative and qualitative data collected during the CanWork program. Ethics approval from the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics team was granted (Ethics Protocol #23-0039).

From September 2020 to September 2022, 107 students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges participated in the CanWork pilot program. Of this total, 62 (58%) were in Social Sciences, 18 (17%) in Science, 18 (17%) in Humanities and Fine Arts, and nine (8%) in Computer Science. Seventy-five students (70%) identified as female and 32 (30%) as male, the only two gender declaration categories available at UVic at the time of the program launch (University of Victoria, 2022). Based on the

academic disciplines represented in the CanWork cohort, this gender breakdown is in line with Canadian data collected on diversity and inclusion in WIL by Itano-Boase et al. (2021), which revealed that women are more likely than men to be registered in Social Sciences and Humanities; and, more specifically, that students with disabilities were more likely to be enrolled in these disciplines.

Of the 107 CanWork students, 60 (56%) obtained one or more co-op work placements and 47 (44%) did not. Of the 60 students who obtained co-op placements, 26 (43%) were in Social Sciences, 17 (28%) were in Science, 12 (20%) were in Humanities and Fine Arts, and five (8%) were in Computer Science. These results reveal that students from different disciplines had different rates of success in finding co-op work terms. In total, 94% of Science students obtained one or more work terms, followed by 67% of Humanities and Fine Arts students, 56% of Computer Science students, and 42% of Social Sciences students. The source of these differences is unclear but may reflect differences in labor market demand between disciplines.

Of those who successfully secured a work placement, 45 (60% of all females) were female and 15 (47% of all males) were male. Despite only collecting male/female gender identity, it appears that female students were more successful in obtaining co-op placements than male students.

In the first year of the CanWork pilot program, the decision was made to exclude international students. Based on processing times for obtaining a co-op work permit during COVID-19, it was considered unlikely that international students would obtain their work permit in time to start their co-op work term. In the second year of the pilot, the eligibility criteria were amended and 10 international students with disabilities were admitted. However, none of the international students were successful in obtaining a co-op placement. Several factors may have contributed to this result, including continued and unexpected delays in obtaining a co-op work permit, a lack of Canadian work experience, and their ineligibility for federal wage subsidy programs that are restricted to Canadian citizens and permanent residents. In their analysis of diversity and inclusion in WIL programs, Itano-Boase et al. (2021) noted these systemic barriers, among others, as limiting the participation of international students in WIL programs.

Demographic data based on race, Indigenous identity, sexual orientation, and income were not collected as part of the CanWork pilot program, therefore, it is not possible to provide intersectional analysis. The sections below discuss the extent to which the pilot program supported the removal of barriers for students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges.

REMOVING BARRIERS: THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT

After completion of the program, four main data sets were examined:

1. Post-pre-survey,
2. Exit interviews,
3. Quantitative data collected during the program, and
4. Qualitative data collected during and after the program.

Post-Pre-Survey

The post-pre-assessment, introduced by Heibert and Magnusson (2014), is designed to overcome an inherent limitation of self-assessment: learners do not know what they do not know. Post-pre-assessment reduces this limitation by asking learners to assess their self-perceived progress at the end

of a program, when they have a better understanding of the skills and/or abilities the learning program was designed to address.

To explore students' self-perceived growth during the CanWork program, a retrospective self-assessment was conducted, focused on five main themes relating to the ability to navigate the labor market. Student participation in the post-pre-survey was voluntary and anonymous and was made available through the internal messaging system in the virtual co-op preparation course. For the CanWork program, students were asked to rate their progress before and after the program on a five-point scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," along the following five dimensions:

1. I had/have confidence in my capacity to participate in co-operative education.
2. I had/have a clear understanding of what type of employment environment would best suit my abilities.
3. I had/have a clear understanding of what strategy I would use to disclose my disability to a prospective/current employer.
4. I had/have the knowledge and skills to create a résumé and cover letter to highlight my experience to prospective employers.
5. I felt/feel confident about employment opportunities after graduation.

Finally, to assess the likelihood that participants' self-perceived growth was attributable to their participation in the program, a multiple-choice question was added to the post-pre assessment, asking them to estimate the degree to which the program itself, relative to other contributing factors, was responsible for their progress. Twenty of 107 CanWork Students completed the voluntary survey (return rate of 18.7%). Seventeen of the 20 respondents indicated that the program mostly or somewhat influenced their self-reported change, demonstrating self-perceived growth in all five themes queried. To explore the statistical significance of these results, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was performed for each of the five questions. The test showed a significant difference ($p < .05$) for questions 2, 3, and 4, but no significant difference for questions 1 and 5 (Table 2).

TABLE 2: Mean ratings out of 1-5 for work readiness pre-and post-CanWork.

Theme	Pre-CanWork	Post-CanWork	*P*-value
Confidence in capacity to participate in co-op	2.75	3.55	.0559
Clear understanding of suitable employment environment	2.55	3.55	.0016
Clear understanding of disclosure strategies	2.55	3.6	.0003
Knowledge and skills of résumé and cover letter writing	2.55	3.6	.0004
Feeling confident about employment opportunities after graduation	2.55	3.6	.0655

While the data set is limited by a low return rate, the self-perceived growth in all five themes provides preliminary evidence that well-resourced programs can support self-perceived work readiness skills for students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges.

Exit Interviews

All CanWork students, whether or not they had secured a co-op placement, were invited to participate in an exit interview. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the exit interviews were conducted virtually. The exit interviews were semi-structured and included 10 guiding questions. Fifteen students participated in the exit interviews. Because the post-pre-survey was anonymous, it is not possible to determine the overlap in the respondents with the interviews. A thematic analysis of the exit interview transcripts identified 20 themes, listed descending from most frequently cited by the 15 students (Table 3).

TABLE 3: Exit interview themes.

Theme	# of citations
Receiving one-on-one support	15
Labor market insights	14
Information regarding disclosure	12
Importance of demographic-specific support	12
Gained confidence	11
Employability	9
Feeling of self-agency	9
Knowing that supports exist	9
Self-advocacy skills	8
Importance of peer connections	7
Not meeting admission requirements	6
Concern about maintaining GPA	6
Feeling of job readiness	6
Pro-active approach	5
Fear of not keeping up academic commitments	4
Fear of stigma	4
Navigating academic vs WIL experience	4
Mock interview experience	4
Targeted job development	4
Transferable skills	4

The analysis of the exit interview responses revealed four overarching themes that were identified as strong drivers of success for students in the CanWork pilot program:

1. Availability of one-on-one support (identified by all interviewees)
2. Gaining labor market insights and support in developing résumés and cover letters (14/15 interviewees)
3. Demographic-specific supports relating to disability and/or mental health challenges (13/15 interviewees)
4. Information regarding disclosure in the workplace (12/15 interviewees).

The analysis also highlights some negative themes that shaped students' experiences of the CanWork pilot program. The presence of these negative views suggests that they remain potential barriers for students with disabilities and mental health challenges, even for co-op programs with the students' unique needs in mind. However, the relatively infrequent appearance of these negative themes relative to the four positive themes suggests that the unique supports provided by the CanWork pilot program at least helped minimize some key barriers to accessibility and inclusion in co-op. That is, positive themes were more common than negative themes within respondents' experiences of the program.

The findings serve to identify program characteristics that go towards addressing many of the gaps identified by Gatto et al. (2021a), including minimal references to disability supports in WIL programs and a lack of understanding of workplace accommodation and disclosure. By building confidence and equipping students with disability-related information, support, and self-advocacy skills, the CanWork program may support students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges to gain employability skills that are uniquely supportive of their success in co-op and possibly in the labor market after graduation (Lindsay et al., 2018a, 2018b).

Quantitative Data Collected During the Program

As noted earlier, the CanWork program removed minimum GPA requirements that are normally part of optional co-op programs at UVic. At the completion of the program, an analysis was conducted of the relationship between students' GPAs upon admission and their success in securing co-op placements. Of the 107 students in the program, 56 students (52%) met the faculty minimum GPA requirements, while 51 (48%) did not. Of the 60 CanWork participants who obtained one or more co-op placements, all of whom successfully completed the Introduction to Professional Practice course, 33 (55%) would have met the minimum GPA requirements, while 27 (45%) did not. A chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant association between students' GPAs upon admission and their success in securing co-op placements (X^2 (2, N = 60) = 2.1, p = .0.363).

These results indicate that in a well-resourced program with suitable supports for students, GPA is not a reliable indicator of the likelihood of success in WIL for students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges. Navigating post-secondary education while living with a disability or mental health challenge presents unique complexities (Lindsay et al., 2018a) that may impact GPA for individuals in different ways (Parsons et al., 2021). Minimum GPA requirements are an unnecessary barrier that deprive some students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges with important WIL experiences that could better prepare them to succeed in the workplace post-graduation, thereby reducing the documented disparity in employment and earnings between persons with and without disabilities (Moriña & Biagiotti, 2022; Morris et al., 2018; Zarifa et al., 2015).

Qualitative Data Collected During and After the Program

On occasion, students provided the working group with voluntary testimonials during the program that helped inform program planning and administration. Many of the comments validated features of the program design that had been informed by the initial stakeholder group prior to the development of the CanWork program. Some comments also illustrated the benefit of the program, particularly the targeted co-op preparation course, even for those participants who did not obtain a co-op placement.

The following testimonials provide a representative sample of comments received:

> As a person with multiple mild disabilities, I felt scared and discouraged, that my health, dyslexia or anxiety would make me unqualified for an office job. CanWork not only helped me acknowledge what I could do and focus on my strengths - but they also informed and supported me on how I could get accommodations for what I would struggle with. Their resume and cover letter tips were so valuable, and their support post job placement has been really helpful… (CanWork participant)

> …despite not having found a work experience, I learned about seeking employment and navigating the workplace as an employee living with a disability and gained invaluable tools around disclosure. With the multitude of indispensable skills I acquired through this program, I now feel more than prepared to search for employment on my own. (CanWork participant)

These comments and many others that came forward during the two-year life of the program, suggest that CanWork was successful in supporting many participating students to succeed in WIL. However, in interpreting the CanWork findings, it is important to consider the relatively small number of students in the program and the low rate of participation in the surveys and interviews conducted to evaluate the program. The program was developed and delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic, when student engagement was low, especially for vulnerable students (Whitley et al., 2021). This factor likely affected the willingness of students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges to participate on the initial stakeholder group and in the evaluations, possibly omitting important perspectives from the program design and limiting the generalizability of the results. As well, the CanWork program was very well resourced, providing extensive one-on-one support for students. Post-secondary institutions who intend to offer targeted programs may need similar resourcing to achieve the positive outcomes reported for the CanWork program.

CONCLUSIONS

While this case study is limited by the small data sample, the information gathered throughout the CanWork program indicate the importance of one-on-one and demographic-specific supports in fostering success in co-op for students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges. These findings correlate with the findings of Gatto et al. (2021b) and Itano-Boase et al. (2021). Many students said that were it not for the specific support provided by the pilot program, they would not have considered participating in co-operative education. For some students, knowing these supports were available provided the necessary confidence to participate in co-op.

One important finding from this research is that is that in a well-resourced program, GPA requirements are an unnecessary barrier to the participation of students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges. UVic's optional co-op programs have GPA requirements that would normally have precluded about half of the students within CanWork from participating, limiting their access to meaningful degree-related work experience during their undergraduate studies. This finding calls for further research on GPA as a benchmark and predictor of success in WIL by students with disabilities and without disabilities.

As post-secondary institutions are making substantial commitments to equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion, the CanWork program serves as an example of the kinds of specialized support that can be provided to support students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges in co-op or other forms of WIL. Specialized pilot projects can also provide the impetus for the broader systemic changes

that are necessary in WIL programs and the broader labor market. Addressing the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in WIL through specialized services can lead to changes in the design and operation of traditional programs.

Following the completion of the two-year CanWork program, students were given the option to transition into a regular faculty-based co-op program, with the added support of a new Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Team. This team was created partially to ensure the continued availability of some of the enhanced one-on-one support formerly provided by the job coaches during the CanWork pilot program. Importantly, however, the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Team is also able to assist all Co-op and Career staff in how to support students with disabilities and/or mental health challenges in their regular programs, especially around issues of self-disclosure and accommodation in the workplace.

Moreover, the Discovery module that was initially developed specifically for CanWork has been added to the regular co-op preparation courses taken by all UVic co-op students, along with information on how all students can be effective allies to people with disabilities and mental health challenges in their WIL settings (Li et al., 2023). Finally, the specialized employer outreach and job development from the CanWork program has been extended to all UVic co-op employers. Resources and/or training have been developed to support employers to help them create inclusive job postings and accessible co-op experiences for students. It is anticipated that these resources will result in greater co-op participation for students with disabilities, and that they will see themselves and their peers thriving in an increasing number of successful WIL placements.

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About the Journal

The International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning (IJWIL) publishes double-blind peer-reviewed original research and topical issues related to Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). IJWIL first published in 2000 under the name of Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education (APJCE).

In this Journal, WIL is defined as:

> *An educational approach involving three parties – the student, educational institution, and an external stakeholder – consisting of authentic work-focused experiences as an intentional component of the curriculum. Students learn through active engagement in purposeful work tasks, which enable the integration of theory with meaningful practice that is relevant to the students' discipline of study and/or professional development* (Zegwaard et al., 2023, p. 38*).

Examples of practice include off-campus workplace immersion activities such as work placements, internships, practicum, service learning, and cooperative education (co-op), and on-campus activities such as work-related projects/competitions, entrepreneurships, student-led enterprise, student consultancies, etc. WIL is related to, and overlaps with, the fields of experiential learning, work-based learning, and vocational education and training.

The Journal's aim is to enable specialists working in WIL to disseminate research findings and share knowledge to the benefit of institutions, students, WIL practitioners, curricular designers, and researchers. The Journal encourages quality research and explorative critical discussion that leads to the advancement of quality practices, development of further understanding of WIL, and promote further research.

The Journal is financially supported by the Work-Integrated Learning New Zealand (WILNZ; www.wilnz.nz), and the University of Waikato, New Zealand, and receives periodic sponsorship from the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN), University of Waterloo, and the World Association of Cooperative Education (WACE).

Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts sought by IJWIL is of two forms: 1) *research publications* describing research into aspects of work-integrated learning and, 2) *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and provide critical explorative discussion around a topical issue. The journal will, on occasions, consider good practice submissions.

Research publications should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry. A detailed description and justification for the methodology employed. A description of the research findings - tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance to current established literature, implications for practitioners and researchers, whilst remaining mindful of the limitations of the data, and a conclusion preferably including suggestions for further research.

Topical discussion articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical and scholarly discussion on the importance of the issues, critical insights to how to advance the issue further, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.

Good practice and program description papers. On occasions, the Journal seeks manuscripts describing a practice of WIL as an example of good practice, however, only if it presents a particularly unique or innovative practice or was situated in an unusual context. There must be a clear contribution of new knowledge to the established literature. Manuscripts describing what is essentially 'typical', 'common' or 'known' practices will be encouraged to rewrite the focus of the manuscript to a significant educational issue or will be encouraged to publish their work via another avenue that seeks such content.

By negotiation with the Editor-in-Chief, the Journal also accepts a small number of *Book Reviews* of relevant and recently published books.

* Zegwaard, K. E., Pretti, T. J., Rowe, A. D., & Ferns, S. J. (2023). Defining work-integrated learning. In K. E. Zegwaard & T. J. Pretti (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of work-integrated learning* (3rd ed., pp. 29-48). Routledge.

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