



POLICY PAPER

Student Entrepreneurship, Employment, & Employability

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ABOUT OUSA

OUSA represents the interests of 150,000 professional and undergraduate, full-time and part-time university students at eight student associations across Ontario. Our vision is for an accessible, affordable, accountable, and high quality post-secondary education in Ontario. To achieve this vision we've come together to develop solutions to challenges facing higher education, build broad consensus for our policy options, and lobby government to implement them.

The member institutions and home office of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance operate on the ancestral and traditional territories of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, Leni-Lunaape, Anishnawbek, and Mississauga peoples.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The conversation on preparing students for the workforce continues to evolve and ensuring that students have the proper skills to succeed after graduation is a growing priority. Students are interested in taking a broader approach to preparation for the workforce, focusing not only on discipline-specific knowledge, but also providing opportunities for students to develop skills inside and outside the classroom. It is OUSA's hope that these recommendations will support students' as they transition into the workforce.

THE PROBLEM

Barriers to Experiential Learning

Students are concerned that there are limited work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities for students in general science and arts-based programs and that there are not enough co-operative (co-op) learning opportunities. Similarly, employers do not feel that enough incentives exist to increase co-op placements, with financial constraints cited as a barrier to employers being able to provide WIL opportunities. Students are concerned that those with the greatest financial need may not be able to afford mandatory unpaid placements (MUP) for their program of choice, and the time commitment for MUPs can prevent students from pursuing additional employment in order to afford tuition and the cost of living. There is further concern that various programs require MUPs in order to graduate, placing additional financial burdens and a potential barrier to graduation on students. The expectation that students in certain disciplines must pursue an unpaid work opportunity to secure a job in their field is an additional concern. There is also concern that limited centralized data exists on the quality and affordability of MUPs.

Students are also concerned that those pursuing placements out-of-town have to personally pay for additional travel and accommodation costs. They are also concerned about the demands of work placements that can place additional stress and pressure onto students, many of whom may be living in a new area where they do not have the same access to mental health and support services as they do in their home or university communities. Similar to precarious workers, most co-op students do not receive benefits in the workplace such as sick and personal days. There is also concern that community service learning (CSL) based courses and programs currently have little structure, posing difficulties and greater effort for course development. CSL partnerships often depend on the commitment of individual faculty members, in which faculty turnover causes loss of these relationships and loss of institutional memory.

Gaps in Skills Areas

The skills necessary to succeed in the workforce are constantly evolving. For example, students are increasingly required to possess skills in financial literacy and numeracy, yet there are presently no consistent definitions for these terms at the provincial level. Further, students are concerned about the research showing that students are graduating with insufficient levels of financial literacy and numeracy. Students also express concern that as more students turn to areas of study that focus on technical skills, less time is spent developing communication skills, and the increased use of technology in education means skills like verbal communication, writing, research, and public speaking are becoming less of a focus. Students also reported that professionalism and business etiquette were not enough of a focus during their post-secondary education (PSE). They are concerned that those outside of business-focused programs tend to receive fewer resources and development opportunities in these areas.

Students are also concerned that graduates are reporting that certain human or professional skills that were deemed necessary in their careers were not enough of a focus in their PSE. There is a similar concern that post-secondary students who do not have the opportunity to develop their own professional networks lack the ability to connect with professionals in their field. Studies have shown that some students lack the ability to articulate the skills they have acquired in their PSE, and many recent graduates are unable to articulate these skills and non-academic experience to prospective employers. Students are also concerned that institutions do not have a sufficient system set in place to assist students in doing so.

Entrepreneurship Barriers

Students are concerned that many students with entrepreneurial goals have the innovative vision and production of intellectual property (IP), but lack business resources and commercialized assistance. They

are concerned that entrepreneurship disproportionately disadvantages individuals that do not have the financial stability to risk pursuing an entrepreneur opportunity. There are additional concerns that not all universities have strong protections for their students' IP and that foreign funding may have negative effects for the protection of IP associated with entrepreneurial ventures. There is also concern amongst students that the availability of entrepreneurial research opportunities is disproportionate across academic programs. Further, internships programs are often narrowly focused on practical experience and students are concerned that they are not developing sufficient human skills that are often desired by employers. Additionally, students are concerned that many do not have the finances to afford a work term placement, many of which are unpaid, and that many do not have the opportunity to receive experience in their related field prior to entering the workforce.

Limitations to Employment & Labour Protections

Students are not included under the Employment Standards Act (ESA), and students are concerned that this exemption leads to confusion surrounding students' rights when pursuing a work placement or co-op term. They are further concerned that the exemption of students from the ESA could leave students open to exploitation and unfair treatment in the workplace. Students are also concerned that many international students are unable to remain in Ontario due to the inability to retain a visa and permits post-graduation. Certain fields require security clearances that are disproportionately difficult for international students to receive. They are concerned that the lack of international student support and transition tools during the undergraduate degree may lead to a lack of retention in the place of study. Finally, students are concerned that many international students are unaware of the processes in place to ensure residency post-graduation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Experiential Learning

Students recommend that the provincial government provide investments in the Career Ready Fund (CRF) to incentivize employers to increase opportunities for disciplines and programs of study that currently lack WIL opportunities. They recommend that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) collaborate with the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) to create a targeted framework for high-quality WIL opportunities for all areas of study. The provincial government should also incentivize employers to hire co-op students with the option of reverting existing tax credits provided for co-op students into upfront grants. Students recommend that the provincial government create envelope funding to support the creation of meaningful, relevant co-op opportunities in small businesses and not for profit organizations, and that it continue investing in MTCU's CRF in order to increase co-op education programs. Similarly, they recommend that it provide envelope funding for institutions to pursue flexible work terms. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) should also conduct research on MUPs in Ontario, in order to assess program quality and affordability.

Students recommend that the provincial government create a grant that students pursuing program-mandatory placements can access for travel and accommodations. They also recommend that the province ban accreditation bodies from requiring or supporting unpaid placements as well as discourage institutions and employers from allowing unpaid work placements. Additionally, MTCU should work with the Ministry of Labour to revisit the ESA, and ensure that all internships, that are not required for academic accreditation, are guaranteed to receive fair compensation. While MTCU works toward addressing the gaps that allow for unpaid internships to exist, they should also establish guidelines that ensure that students in an unpaid internship are not required to work more than 37.5 hours per week.

Students further recommend that HEQCO develop a best practice system on how best university co-op/experiential learning centres can prepare for the demands and pressures of their placements, and that COU do the same for students to learn how to access wellness resources when pursuing out of town work terms. Students also recommend that MTCU collaborate with the Ministry of Labour to encourage co-op and workplaces to give students an allotted number of personal days throughout their term and provide faculty incentives to develop meaningful CSL courses. Additionally, COU, HEQCO, and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations should create a best practice system for administering CSL based courses.

Skills Areas

Students recommend that MTCU perform a triennial review of the report published in 2016 by the Premier's Highly-Skilled Workforce Panel (PHSWP) to ensure that undergraduate students are learning necessary skills for the evolving workforce. They recommend that MTCU establish a set of best practices for institutions to provide a combination cross-faculty access to courses and open resources that will provide students with the necessary skills of financial literacy and numeracy, and that it include strong communication skills as a priority within the PHSWP review. Students also recommend that MTCU provide targeted funding on a per use basis for resources such as writing centres and online learning platforms for students to develop their communication skills. They recommend that MTCU maintain the previously established open subscription to LinkedIn Learning, where post-secondary students are able to take courses and develop necessary skills. Further, MTCU should work with HEQCO to develop a working definition of professional development (PD), as well as define a set of learning outcomes that could be associated with PD.

Additionally, students recommend that MTCU provide targeted funding to career services centres (CSCs) to increase opportunities for students to strengthen business etiquette and human skills development. They should also provide envelope funding for CSCs to expand programming and student supports. Students further recommend that HEQCO work with MTCU to establish a set of best practices for CSCs around skills articulation and building students' ability to understand the technical and human skills they have developed. Students also recommend that MTCU establish a best practice model that post-secondary institutions may follow, outlining how to convey the academic, oral, practical, and writing skills acquired through PSE and extracurriculars. MTCU should also create a transition model for students moving from PSE into the workforce, in consultation with the Business Higher/Education Roundtable and relevant business stakeholders who will help in addressing common challenges and outline accessible resources to support student transition into the workforce.

Entrepreneurship

Students recommend that the provincial government lobby the federal government to continue partnering with universities, specifically in Ontario, to fund the inclusion of technology transfer officers in programs and faculties where they are needed most. The government should also provide financial incentives for the development of entrepreneurial hubs, incubators, and start-up initiatives on university campuses, as well as regulate IP management standards to protect student researchers and incubator residents at universities. Additionally, students recommend that HEQCO research and develop minimum standards of skill development for internship programs so that entrepreneurial students are best equipped for their ventures. Students further recommend that internship programs offer more opportunities for students to reflect on their experience, link course work with practical experience, and implement creative ideas into practice. They recommend that the provincial government continue to provide envelope funding to create and maintain WIL programs that focus on innovation and cultural change, as well as funding for students who require travel and living arrangements for their work term. The provincial government should also incentivize partnerships between universities and local and regional businesses to establish unique WIL programs with present grant funding.

Employment & Labour Protections

Students recommend that MTCU work with the Ministry of Labour to update the ESA to include students to have to the same rights as Ontario workers and to create a guide outlining students' rights in the workplace. Further, HEQCO should conduct research about the various challenges that interfere with international students integrating into the workforce. The Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services should work with HEQCO to create a process that aids in the process of attaining work visas and permits during PSE in order to ensure that future employment is not hindered for students. HEQCO should also work with the government to create a best practice model to provide international students with academic, social, and cultural support and help them tackle integration challenges. Students recommend that MTCU provide envelope funding to institutions to create services that support international students to ensure that post-graduation retention is manageable. Additionally, the provincial government should work in collaboration with the federal government to solve issues related to retaining a visa or permit after graduation in order to streamline the process. Finally, the provincial government should lobby the federal government to ensure that security clearances are not unduly difficult for international students to receive.

INTRODUCTION

As technology advances and a new generation of graduates emerge, the conversation around preparing students for the workforce continues to evolve. There is a growing desire to take a broader approach to preparing students for the workforce and move toward an approach that not only focuses on discipline-specific knowledge, but one that provides a variety of opportunities for students to develop skills inside and outside of the classroom.

Ensuring that students are learning the proper skills to succeed after graduation is a growing priority for many Ontarians and Canadians. An increasing number of post-secondary institutions and governments are supporting the skills development of students across the province and across Canada. For example, in 2016, the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel brought together stakeholders to identify challenges and produce recommendations to better support students transitioning into the workplace;¹ and in May 2018, the federal government announced an investment of \$225 million over four years to create a "Future Skills Centre" to explore new approaches to skills development and identify the skills employers need in their workplace.² It is important that students, post-secondary institutions, and governments continue to prioritize student preparedness for life after graduation.

In this paper, OUSA will focus on the importance of expanding experiential learning opportunities for all willing and qualified students. Experiential learning, a term that refers to learning through reflection on doing, encompasses a variety of different opportunities such as work integrated learning and community service learning.³ These experiential learning opportunities enable students to develop a wide-range of skills and graduate university with a better understanding what future employers expect of them.

More employers are expecting graduates to have a variety of skills before entering the workforce and more students are expecting their post-secondary education to teach them these skills. Communication, critical thinking, and teamwork skills have become increasingly important in the workforce and are often not taught in traditional, lecture-style teaching methods.⁴ OUSA addresses how to better encourage this skills development and articulation for recent university graduates. Additionally, this paper highlights the importance of entrepreneurial opportunities on campus which allow students to develop complex skills through doing, but also enables them to be exposed to "real-life" business problems.

Lastly, OUSA highlights the challenges that students participating in work integrated learning opportunities face. Most notably, students ask for more complete and comprehensive employment protections for students in co-ops and internships and encourage more mental health supports for students participating in work integrated learning.

The following principles, concerns, and recommendations have been compiled by students, for students, and represent their views on how to best support skills development and prepare students transitioning into the workforce.

¹ Premier Kathleen Wynne, *September 2016 Mandate Letter: Advanced Education and Skills Development* (Office of the Premier), updated March 7, 2019, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-advanced-education-and-skills-development#section-2>.

² Employment & Social Development Canada, "Government of Canada Launches Future Skills Centre Call for Proposals and Future Skills Council Call for Applications," *NewsWire*, accessed March 21, 2019, <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/government-of-canada-launches-future-skills-centre-call-for-proposals-and-future-skills-council-call-for-applications-683600471.html>.

³ Business/Higher Education Roundtable, *Taking the Pulse of Work-Integrated Learning in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Business/Higher Education Round Table, 2015).

⁴ Council of Ontario Universities, *Partnering for a Better Future in Ontario* (Toronto, ON: Council of Ontario Universities, 2017).

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

INCREASING WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS ALL DISCIPLINES

Principle: Work integrated learning opportunities should be available to all interested and qualified students.

Principle: Work integrated learning opportunities should be available to students across all disciplines.

Concern: There are limited work integrated learning opportunities for students in general science and arts-based programs.

Recommendation: The provincial government should provide investments in the Career Ready Fund to incentivize employers to increase opportunities for disciplines and programs of study that currently lack work integrated learning opportunities such as general arts and sciences.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should collaborate with the Council of Ontario Universities in order to create a targeted framework for high-quality work integrated learning opportunities for all areas of study.

Work integrated learning (WIL), “such as cooperative education, field placements and internships”,⁵ gives students the opportunity to connect what they learn in the classroom to the workplace. By gaining industry-specific applied knowledge, students who have had WIL opportunities feel more confident in their skills and are better prepared to enter the workforce. In a 2016 survey conducted by Abacus Data, 86% of student respondents who had WIL opportunities reported that they felt better prepared for the workforce because of their industry-specific knowledge and experience, compared to the 49% of students who did not receive WIL opportunities during their post-secondary education (PSE).⁶ Additionally, students who had the opportunity to participate in WIL during their PSE reported higher levels of satisfaction with their post-secondary experience.⁷ As such, it is imperative that all students have WIL opportunities available to them, regardless of program of academic study, so that they can gain more industry-based knowledge and be better prepared for the workforce.

In 2012, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) released a study surveying employers who provided WIL opportunities to post-secondary students. The results of this study indicated that employers providing these opportunities concentrated primarily on hiring business and engineering students, with less emphasis placed on general arts and science programs.⁸ Additionally, programs such as the Student Work Integrated Learning Program exist to increase WIL opportunities for STEM students and do not currently exist for students in arts and humanities programs.⁹ Further, in OUSA’s Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey, only 24% of respondents in arts and humanities programs reported participating in WIL opportunities during their PSE experience, compared to the 52% of respondents who studied engineering, architecture, and related technologies.¹⁰

In order to address the lack of WIL positions offered to students in general arts and science-based programs, the provincial government, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, should provide envelope funding to increase the number of opportunities across all programs of study. It should provide further investments in the Career Ready Fund to incentivize employers to increase opportunities for disciplines and programs of study that currently lack WIL opportunities, such as general arts and

⁵ Peggy Sattler & Julie Peters, *Work-Integrated Learning and Post-Secondary Graduates: The Perspective of Ontario Employers*. (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2012), 10.

⁶ Abacus Data, *Work Integrated Learning and Post-Secondary Education: What Students Think* (Ottawa, ON: Abacus Data, 2016).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Peggy Sattler & Julie Peters, *Work-Integrated Learning and Post-Secondary Graduates: The Perspective of Ontario Employers*. (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2012).

⁹ “Student Work Placement Program,” Government of Canada, accessed January 31, 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/work-integrated-learning.html>.

¹⁰ OUSA, *Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey 2017*, data forthcoming.

sciences. Additionally, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Council of Ontario Universities in order to create a targeted framework to promote and create WIL opportunities for under-recognized programs. The purpose of this framework should be to define types of WIL opportunities appropriate for programs such as general arts and sciences that do not see as many of these opportunities. This framework would also focus on how the skills students obtain in arts-based and general science programs can be utilized in the work place in order to fill the needs of, and benefit, employers and those who provide WIL opportunities.

INCREASING CO-OP OPPORTUNITIES IN ONTARIO

Principle: All willing and qualified students should have the ability to access co-operative learning opportunities.

Principle: Enough co-operative learning opportunities should exist in order to ensure that all eligible students in co-op programs are able to secure work placements.

Concern: Students do not feel that there are enough co-operative learning opportunities.¹¹

Concern: Employers do not feel that enough incentives exist to increase co-op placements.

Concern: Financial constraints are cited as one of the largest barriers to employers being able to provide work integrated learning opportunities.

Recommendation: The provincial government should incentivize employers to hire co-op students with the option of reverting existing tax credits provided for co-op students into upfront grants.

Recommendation: The provincial government should create envelope funding to support the creation of meaningful, relevant co-operative learning opportunities in small businesses and not for profit organizations.

Recommendation: The provincial government should continue investing in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and University's Career Ready Fund in order to increase co-operative education programs.

Recommendation: The provincial government should provide envelope funding for institutions to pursue flexible work terms.

As a type of work integrated learning program (WIL), co-operative (co-op) education programs are programs that alternate periods of study with periods of paid work experience related to one's program of study.¹² Co-op education programs provide students with the skills to contribute to the economy post-graduation as part of the highly-skilled workforce. Students pursuing co-op education have the opportunity to apply knowledge learned in the classroom to the workplace, which better prepares them for entering the workforce. Additionally, students that graduate from co-op programs in Canada are shown to earn higher salaries than students that graduate from non-co-op programs.¹³ Co-op opportunities are a low-risk mechanism that allow students to explore potential career fields while allowing employers to recruit and train future employees.¹⁴ These programs are extremely valuable in helping students define their career path, and as such, there should be enough co-op placements to meet student demand for these opportunities.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Co-operative Education Definition," Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada, accessed February 1, 2019, <https://www.cewilcanada.ca/co-op-defined.html>.

¹³ Business/Higher Education Roundtable, *Taking the Pulse of Work-Integrated Learning in Canada* (Toronto, ON: Business/Higher Education Round Table, 2015).

¹⁴ Jennifer Lewington, "Co-op Programs Let Students Learn and Earn," *The Globe and Mail*, November 13, 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/education/canadian-university-report/article-co-op-programs-let-students-learn-and-earn/>.

However, in Abacus Data's 2016 survey, only 13% of student respondents felt that there were enough WIL opportunities available to them, indicating a demand for more co-op placements in Canada.¹⁵ Additionally, only 33% of respondents to OUSA's Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey reported having participated in a WIL experience.¹⁶ In addition to students feeling that there are not enough co-op programs, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) has indicated that student demand for these opportunities is continuing to grow.¹⁷ And while student demand grows, employers do not feel that current government incentives for these opportunities are enough, which also contributes to the lack of opportunities available. Firms who do not participate in WIL programs have cited financial constraints as one of the largest barriers to participating.¹⁸ Additionally, employers, particularly those in small to medium sized businesses, are uncertain about the economic conditions and their return on investment when it comes to human capital, which acts as an additional barrier to the development and investment in co-op education programs.¹⁹

Currently, companies who hire co-op students are eligible to receive the co-operative education tax credit (CETC) which reimburses employers of smaller businesses 25%-30% of eligible expenditures.²⁰ Despite this incentive, only 33% of co-op employers in Ontario have claimed these credits.²¹ In order to enhance this incentive so that it will appeal to more employers, the government should provide the opportunity for businesses to revert the amount they would collect in tax credits into upfront grants contingent on the completion of a student's co-op education term. This reversion to upfront grants would target small to medium sized businesses that may not benefit from these tax credits to the same degree that larger businesses do. In order to address growing demand for co-op placements, the government should develop envelope funding to support both post-secondary institutions and employer incentives in order to offer more co-op programs. In particular, the government should target small to medium sized businesses, as well as not for profit organizations, that may not be able to provide these opportunities without targeted funding.

Currently the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities houses the Career Ready Fund, which aims to assist post-secondary institutions as well as employers and community organizations in creating experiential learning opportunities for students in Ontario.²² In order to support greater development of co-op opportunities, the government should maintain and continue to invest in this fund. Another approach is the University of Waterloo's implementation of "flexible work terms" which allows students to pursue the same amount of work experience as they would in a traditional co-op program with the added benefit of having the opportunity to explore a broad range of work experiences. Flexible work terms allow students to try things outside of their discipline, or to pursue work opportunities that do not exist in their program.²³ By increasing these opportunities across institutions, students would be better able to access work experiences similar to co-op experiences, particularly those attending schools that do not offer large co-op programs, or co-op programs in specific areas of study. As such, OUSA recommends that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities provide envelope funding for institutions to pursue flexible work terms.

¹⁵ Abacus Data, *Work Integrated Learning and Post-Secondary Education: What Students Think* (Ottawa, ON: Abacus Data, 2016).

¹⁶ OUSA, Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey 2017 data, forthcoming.

¹⁷ R.A Malatest & Associates Ltd., *Barriers to Work Integrated Opportunities* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2018).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel, *Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility* (Office of the Premier, 2016).

²⁰ "Co-operative Education Tax Credit," Ontario Ministry of Finance, accessed February 2, 2019, <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/bulletins/ct/4014.html>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² "Career Ready Fund," Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, accessed February 2, 2019, <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/programs/careerreadyfund.html>.

²³ "Flexible Work Terms," University of Waterloo., accessed March 2, 2019, <https://uwaterloo.ca/co-operative-education/find-your-co-op-job/flexible-work-terms>.

MANDATORY UNPAID PLACEMENTS

Principle: Students should be properly compensated for their contributions to a workplace.

Principle: Mandatory unpaid placements should not deter students from pursuing the program of their choice.

Concern: Students with the greatest financial need may not be able to afford mandatory unpaid placements for their program of choice.

Concern: The time commitment associated with mandatory unpaid placements can prevent students from pursuing additional employment in order to afford tuition as well as the cost of living.

Concern: Various programs require mandatory unpaid placements in order to graduate, placing additional financial burdens as well as a potential barrier to graduation on these students.

Concern: Students pursuing placements out-of-town have to personally pay for additional travel and accommodation costs.

Concern: There is limited centralized data that exists surrounding the quality and affordability of mandatory unpaid placements.

Recommendation: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should conduct research on mandatory unpaid placements in Ontario, in order to assess program quality and affordability.

Recommendation: The provincial government should create a grant that students pursuing program-mandatory placements can access for travel and accommodations.

Recommendation: The province should ban accreditation bodies from requiring or supporting unpaid placements.

Internships provide students with the ability to receive hands on experience and learning specific to their field of study. Programs including, but not limited to, nursing and concurrent education typically have a mandatory, unpaid work placement.²⁴ While these mandatory placements provide students with the ability to apply what they learn in the classroom to the workplace, it is essential that they do not place additional financial burdens on students. In addition to this, students should not be deterred from pursuing or completing a program with a mandatory unpaid placement due to financial constraints. Ideally, employers should be compensating students for their contributions to the workplace.

Students have voiced various concerns surrounding unpaid program requirements. For example, students undergoing mandatory unpaid placements typically have to pay tuition in addition to the cost of living, as well as costs associated with their placement.²⁵ The Ontario Nurses' Association has found that many students pursuing their clinical placements work additional jobs in order to afford the cost of living, leading to both physical and emotional exhaustion.²⁶ The limited centralized data that speaks to the quality or affordability of these placements exacerbates this issue as it is necessary in order to strategize on how to improve these programs.²⁷

Mandatory placements not only provide students with great learning opportunities, but they also contribute to the community and as such, the provincial government has a role to play in making these opportunities affordable to students. For some students, affording to complete a mandatory placement

²⁴ Sophia Harris, "Unpaid Academic Internships Called Exploitation by Students," *CBC*, September 22, 2014, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/unpaid-academic-internships-called-exploitation-by-students-1.2770424>.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Ontario Nurses' Association, *Nursing Student Clinical Placements: A Support or a Barrier to Sound Practice?* (Toronto, ON: Ontario Nurses' Association, 2018).

²⁷ Zoe McKnight, "Unpaid interns: No one is keeping track," *The Star*, October 22, 2013, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/10/22/unpaid_interns_no_one_is_keeping_track.html.

may require working a part-time job. In order to allow students to pursue other means of income, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should therefore establish guidelines to specify the maximum number of hours per week that unpaid interns can work. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should further work with the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to conduct research on unpaid mandatory placements. This data would allow the government to assess the quality and affordability of these programs for students in order to provide guidance and act on areas for improvement. Additionally, the government should create a needs-based subsidy that students can apply to in order to secure funding for additional travel and accommodation costs that accrue as they pursue these placements. Additionally, OUSA recommends that the provincial government discourage accreditation bodies from requiring or supporting unpaid internships to ensure that students are being fairly compensated for their contributions to a workplace.

UNPAID WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Principle: Unpaid internships or work opportunities should not place additional financial burden on students.

Principle: Students should have the ability to pursue opportunities in the workplace in order to build networks and connections to aid in securing employability post-graduation.

Concern: Students with the greatest financial need may not have the financial capacity to afford taking on an unpaid work placement.

Concern: There is an expectation that students in certain disciplines must pursue an unpaid work opportunity to secure a job in their field after graduation.

Concern: The time commitment associated with unpaid mandatory placements can prevent students from pursuing additional employment in order to afford tuition as well as the cost of living.

Recommendation: The provincial government should discourage institutions and employers from allowing unpaid work placements.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Ministry of Labour to revisit the Employment Standards Act, and ensure that all internships, that are not required for academic accreditation, are guaranteed to receive fair compensation.

Recommendation: While the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities works toward addressing the gaps that allow for unpaid internships to exist, they should establish guidelines that ensure that students in an unpaid internship should not be required to work more than 37.5 hours per week.

Several employers offer unpaid work placements to interested students so that they can gain employment experience and build networks in their chosen industry. These opportunities provide students with the ability to gather not only relevant work experience, but also allow them to make valuable connections that will aid in their ability to find jobs post-graduation. Students pursuing these valuable opportunities should not be held back, or burdened, by financial constraints.

However, students who have pursued unpaid work placements have reported feeling exploited for the number of hours as well as the caliber of work they are expected to complete for no pay.²⁸ It is the norm for many programs of study and industries that students are expected to take on unpaid work placements in order to build the networks and connections necessary to receive jobs after graduation. This has been highlighted particularly in programs such as journalism and media studies.²⁹ The significant time commitment required for unpaid internships or placements can also constrain one's ability to work a

²⁸ Sophia Harris, "Unpaid Academic Internships Called Exploitation by Students," *CBC*, September 22, 2014, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/unpaid-academic-internships-called-exploitation-by-students-1.2770424>.

²⁹ Amanda Margison, "How do Students Live on Unpaid Internships?," *CBC*, March 30, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/hard-at-work-internships-students-1.4045672>.

part-time job, causing greater concerns when it comes to being able to take advantage of these opportunities. This limitation means that those students with the greatest financial need are more likely to have to forgo unpaid work placement opportunities in lieu of part-time employment to be able to afford tuition or cost of living expenses.

Therefore, in order to allow students to pursue other means of income to supplement unpaid work placements, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should establish guidelines to specify the maximum number of hours per week that unpaid interns can work. These guidelines should be less than the Employment Standards Act's maximum hours of work per week, which is 48 hours.³⁰ Bearing this in mind, OUSA recommends students not work more than 37.5 hours per week at unpaid work placements or internships in order to align with the standard number of hours most Ontarians are expected to work per week. Ultimately, OUSA believes that the province should implement these recommendations while working towards banning unpaid student work placements and fairly compensating students for their work.

WELLNESS SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS PURSUING WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

Principle: Students pursuing work integrated learning opportunities should have wellness supports that are easily accessible to students.

Principle: Students should be prepared and have an understanding of work placement demands prior to beginning any form of work integrated learning opportunity.

Concern: Students pursuing co-op terms and placements may be living in a new area where they do not have the same access to mental health and support services as they do in their home or university communities.

Concern: The demands of work placements can place additional stress and pressure onto students.³¹

Concern: Similar to precarious workers, most co-op students do not receive benefits in the workplace such as sick and personal days.

Recommendation: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should develop a best practice system on how best university co-op/experiential learning centres can prepare and inform students of the demands and pressures of their placements.

Recommendation: The Council of Ontario Universities should develop a best practice system on how best university co-op/experiential learning centres can inform students on how to access wellness resources in the case they are pursuing out of town work terms.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should collaborate with the Ministry of Labour to encourage that co-op and workplaces give students an allotted number of personal days throughout their term.

Students pursuing work terms or co-op placements are likely being exposed to new responsibilities and with that are often facing different stressors and pressures. According to a study published in the Canadian Journal of Higher Education, mental health concerns have been cited as a risk faced by students pursuing co-op placements and the four main areas of concern related to student mental health on co-op terms include: (1) serious mental illness; (2) loneliness/homesickness; (3) low self-confidence/self-worth; and (4) stress.³² In addition to these concerns, students living away from home or their home university

³⁰ "Daily and Weekly Hours of Work," Ontario Ministry of Labour, accessed February 3, 2019, https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/tools/hours/daily_weekly_hours.php.

³¹ Emerald Bensadoun & Hayley Hanks, "Are Students Trading Their Mental Health for a Co-op Placement?," *The Eyeopener*, January 30, 2018, <https://theeyeopener.com/2018/01/are-students-trading-their-mental-health-for-a-co-op-placement/>.

³² Rebecca Newhook, "Are University Co-operative Education Students Safe? Perceptions of Risk to Students on Work Terms," *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 46, no. 1 (2016): 129.

during co-op terms are at higher risk for poor mental health.³³ Not only are students living away from home prone to feelings of loneliness and homesickness when they are on co-op, they are also far away from mental health services and resources in areas that they are familiar with. Given these concerns, it is imperative that students have access to mental health and wellness services on work placements when needed. It is also necessary that students are properly prepared and aware of potential workplace demands prior to beginning their placement. Further, like precarious workers, most co-op students do not receive the benefit of having personal or sick days, which are essential to their health.³⁴ In many cases, students feel pressured to come into work when they are not feeling well, which can further perpetuate mental or physical health issues.

In order to better support students, the provincial government should mandate that the Council of Ontario Universities work with its members to develop best practice systems on how institutional co-op centers can best support students before and during their co-op terms. This could include workshops that prepare students for the demands and expectations certain workplaces may have of them prior to starting their placement. This best practice system should extend to include how best to offer students support while they are on placement by helping students access mental health resources close to their place of work, particularly in situations where they are working in an unfamiliar city.

Currently, students participating in a work experience program through their university are not covered by the Employment Standards Act.³⁵ As such, students on work placements do not have the same rights as other workers, which includes mental health support in the workplace, sick days, or leave. In order to better account for student health and wellness during their work placements, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Ministry of Labour to mandate that employers, who have not already, establish an allotted number of sick days during students' placement terms.

COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

Principle: Students should be able to use their skills to improve and work in their communities.

Concern: Community service learning based courses and programs currently have little structure, posing difficulties and greater effort for course development.

Concern: Community service learning partnerships often depend on the commitment of individual faculty members, in which faculty turnover causes loss of these relationships and loss of institutional memory.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide faculty incentives to develop meaningful community service learning courses.

Recommendation: The Council of Ontario Universities, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, and Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations should create a best practice system for administering community service learning based courses.

Community service learning (CSL) is a type of experiential learning that connects course content and learning objectives to personal, professional, and civic goals.³⁶ These programs offer mutual benefit to students as a learning experience, as well as communities as a means of service work. This method of learning is shown to increase student engagement in relevant subject areas and provide opportunities for

³³ Ibid. 131.

³⁴ Joseph F. Turcotte, Leslie Nichols & Lisa Philipps, *Maximizing Opportunity Mitigating Risk: Aligning Law, Policy and Practice to Strengthen Work-Integrated Learning in Ontario* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2016).

³⁵ "Your Guide to the Employment Standards Act," Government of Ontario, accessed February 2, 2019, <https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-o>.

³⁶ Rhonda Lenton, Robindra Sidhu, Sidak Kaur, Mark Conrad, Brian Kennedy, Yvette Munro, & Richard Smith, *Community Service Learning and Community-Based Learning as Approaches to Enhancing University Service Learning* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2014).

career development.³⁷ CSL courses take place in specified class hours, similar to traditional courses. CSL is gaining popularity among post-secondary institutions in Ontario, with 16 post-secondary institutions hosting CSL programs as of February 2019.³⁸

While CSL proves to be an effective means of learning, there are difficulties with CSL course development. Given that CSL is fairly new to most institutions, many professors remain hesitant to develop these courses. CSL courses require a great deal of coordination between community partners and participating institutions, and given the roles that community partners play in the course, professors might feel that they do not have the same level of control as they would in more traditionally structured courses.³⁹ At the same time, partnerships for CSL opportunities are heavily dependent on faculty building relationships with community groups, which in the case of turnover can result in a loss of relationships or institutional memory for these courses. Additionally, students find some difficulties that they attribute to the loose structure of these types of courses, feeling they are not aware of course goals, objectives, and standards.⁴⁰

In order to address the concerns that instructors may have in developing courses based in CSL, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Council of Ontario Universities to provide incentives to develop these courses. These incentives could take the form of financial bonuses for the additional time and effort required to coordinate the course or credit for professors pursuing tenure. CSL provides valuable opportunity for universities to contribute to the community and should be held as a priority for the government and institutions alike. Additionally, given that CSL courses are fairly new, the Council of Ontario Universities should work with the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations to create a best practice system for CSL based course development, including teaching methods as well as ways that institutions can best support community-based partnerships. Additionally, these best practices should include guidelines for building and maintaining relationships with community-based partners.

SKILLS AREA

RESEARCH AND REPORTING

Principle: Institutions should be providing students with the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to develop in their field of work.

Principle: Institutions should be able to adapt to the changes in the workforce and provide students with access to resources to develop current and in-demand skills.

Concern: The skills necessary to succeed in the workforce are constantly evolving.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should perform a triennial review of the report published in 2016 by the Premier's Highly-Skilled Workforce Panel to ensure that undergraduate students are learning the necessary skills for the evolving workforce.

Today's work environment is one of constant change. Considering the fast pace at which the workforce and economy is evolving, the skills expected of post-secondary graduates are also evolving. Post-secondary graduates are expected to enter the workforce adaptable and equipped to handle the demands of the modern economy. In order for institutions to understand how best to prepare their graduates, more research and reporting has to be done at the provincial level. Presently, students are reporting gaps

³⁷ Rhonda Lenton, Robindra Sidhu, Sidak Kaur, Mark Conrad, Brian Kennedy, Yvette Munro, & Richard Smith, *Community Service Learning and Community-Based Learning as Approaches to Enhancing University Service Learning* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2014) 36.

³⁸ "Community Service Learning in Canada," Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning in Canada, accessed February 3, 2019, <http://www.communityservicelearning.ca/en/partnerships.htm>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

between the skills they develop throughout their undergraduate degree and the skills that are required of them in the workforce.⁴¹ By collecting data and further researching skills development and workplace requirements, institutions will be better able to adapt to the work environment's constant changes and provide students with necessary opportunities.

In 2016, a report was submitted to the Premier of Ontario entitled “A Shared Responsibility, Building the Workforce of Tomorrow”, written by the Premier’s Highly-Skilled Workforce Panel (PHSWP). The PHSWP was comprised of five members, appointed based on their extensive knowledge of the education sector and labour market. Their report was intended to inform the development of a province-wide strategy for the workforce to be able to adapt to the demands of the technology-driven economy. The report considered the future of the workforce, preparing the next generation of innovators, and what skills would be necessary for tomorrow’s workers.⁴²

Reviewing the work and maintaining the mission of the PHSWP triennially would allow the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to understand how the next generation of workers should be educated at the post-secondary level. When assessing the PHSWP report, which includes an initial consultation with over 100 organizations, corporations, and groups,⁴³ the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should consult with a similar list of stakeholders. Moreover, this consultation process should involve extensive collaboration with both the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade. This would allow for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to develop a concrete understanding of what skills undergraduate students should be developing. This review of the PHSWP report would also allow for research, data collection, and reporting on the essential subject of student employment and skills development. It would also contribute to a greater understanding of the skills that employers find necessary in entry-level employees, and ensure all students receive the opportunity to develop these skills – regardless of their field of study.

FINANCIAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Principle: Post-secondary students should have access to opportunities to develop high-demand skill areas that will be necessary in all fields of work, regardless of area of study.

Principle: Post-secondary graduates should finish their education not only with an ability to contribute to the workforce, but with an ability to manage their personal lives; including organizing their personal finances and planning for their future.

Concern: There is presently no consistent definition of financial literacy or numeracy at the provincial level.

Concern: Research shows that students are graduating from their undergraduate education with insufficient levels of financial literacy and numeracy.⁴⁴

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should adopt official definitions for both financial literacy and numeracy.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should establish a set of best practices for institutions to provide a combination cross-faculty access to courses and open resources that will provide students with the necessary skills of financial literacy and numeracy.

⁴¹ Danielle Lenarcic Biss & Jackie Pichette, *Minding the Gap? Ontario Postsecondary Students’ Perceptions on the State of Their Skills* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario) 7.

⁴² The Premier’s Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel, *Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility* (Office of the Premier, 2016) 2.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 74.

⁴⁴ Danielle Lenarcic Biss & Jackie Pichette, *Minding the Gap? Ontario Postsecondary Students’ Perceptions on the State of Their Skills* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario) 6.

A post-secondary education should include the opportunity for students to develop skills outside of their field of study that will help them succeed in their life after graduation. While it is not possible or desirable to obligate students to be interested in any particular area of study, it is possible to ensure that all students have the option to expand their skillset in areas that are of increasing demand. For example, financial literacy and numeracy are important skills not only for the workforce but also for managing one's personal life. However, many students are not enrolled in an area of study that emphasizes these skills, despite their increasing importance.

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario report, "Emphasizing Numeracy as an Essential Skill", defines numeracy as the "deployment of the basic math skills learned in formal schooling in a flexible and goal-oriented way to respond to the needs of a situation."⁴⁵ However, beyond this there is currently no consistent definition of financial literacy or numeracy at the provincial level.⁴⁶ The issue lies in the fact that numeracy is often taught and practiced more in certain programs, despite it being a skill that is both useful and advantageous for all post-secondary graduates. Ultimately, it remains a skill that is currently isolated and inaccessible for students outside math or science courses.

A survey conducted by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario found that financial literacy was an area that students wished they had more exposure to throughout their post-secondary education.⁴⁷ Of the respondents, only 16% of students reported that they had developed strong financial literacy in their undergraduate education, compared to almost 40% of students who reported that they were required to possess strong levels of financial literacy in their chosen field of work.⁴⁸ Responding to the survey, students frequently commented that they had no access to opportunities to develop financial skills, unless they were enrolled in that area of study. Repeatedly, students claimed that they wished they had the opportunity to develop these skills throughout their post-secondary education.⁴⁹ In order to properly evaluate the current status of numeracy and financial literacy, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should adopt a standardized definition for both terms. Moreover, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should establish a set of best practices for institutions to provide resources for students to develop financial literacy and numeracy skills. For example, encouraging institutions to provide an open entry-level course, available to students of all disciplines, that would focus on the development of these skills could be included in a best practice model as a way to achieve this outcome.

COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY SKILLS

Principle: Post-secondary students across all faculties, including STEM programs, should have access to opportunities to expand and develop their communication skills.

Concern: As more students turn to areas of study that focus on technical skills, students are spending less time developing their communication skills.

Concern: With the increased use of technology in education, skills like verbal communication, writing, research, and public speaking are becoming less of a focus.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should include strong communication skills as a priority within the Highly Skilled Workforce Panel review.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide targeted funding on a per use basis for resources such as writing centres and online learning platforms in order for students to develop their communication skills.

⁴⁵ Nicholas Dion, *Emphasizing Numeracy as an Essential Skill* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario) 5.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Danielle Lenarcic Biss & Jackie Pichette, *Minding the Gap? Ontario Postsecondary Students' Perceptions on the State of Their Skills* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario) 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 7.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The “Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies”, a 2012 study, revealed that only one in four university-educated adults possessed the advanced literacy skills necessary to be successful in today’s labour market.⁵⁰ In 2016, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario administered a test called “Education and Skills Online”, which revealed that the levels of literacy between an average first year and fourth year student remain relatively consistent. According to the report, less than half of post-secondary graduates score in the advanced literacy category, a category that indicates high levels of proficiency.⁵¹ The Business Council of Canada’s report, “Navigating Change”, states that employers go beyond technical skills when looking for prospective employees.⁵² This report suggests that communication skills are the second most prominent skill that employers seek in entry-level hires.⁵³

Communication skills are essential for all members of the modern workforce. Whether post-secondary students are pursuing a career in software engineering or primary school teaching, there is an expectation that they are able to communicate confidently. That being said, students should have the opportunity to refine their communication skills while completing post-secondary education. Individuals in programs with a focus on literacy skills may be at an advantage, but not necessarily. Students enrolled in science, technology, engineering, math, or medicine programs may receive fewer opportunities to strengthen core communication skills such as writing, reading, public speaking, verbal communication, and so on. To address this gap, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should include strong communication skills as a priority with the Premier’s Highly-Skilled Workforce Panel Review, in addition to providing targeted funding for resources such as writing centres and online learning platforms. Broadening the network of resources for students to develop communication skills across disciplines is essential in order for all post-secondary graduates to be equipped with one of the top three most important skills employers look for in entry-level hires.

PROFESSIONALISM, BUSINESS ETIQUETTE, AND HUMAN SKILLS

Principle: A post-secondary education should provide its graduates with the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to be successful in their chosen field of work.

Principle: Post-secondary students within all faculties and departments should have access to clear opportunities for professional development.

Principle: Post-secondary graduates should enter the workforce well-prepared to interact with both employers and colleagues in a professional manner.

Principle: Human skills should be equally as valued as technical skills.

Concern: Students entering the workforce have reported that professionalism and business etiquette were not enough of a focus during their post-secondary education.

Concern: Students outside of business-focused programs tend to receive fewer resources and development opportunities for professionalism and business etiquette than students in business-focused programs.

Concern: Graduates are reporting that certain human or professional skills that were deemed necessary in their careers were not enough of a focus in their post-secondary education.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should maintain the previously established open subscription to LinkedIn Learning, an open online resource, where post-secondary students are able to take courses and develop necessary skills.

⁵⁰ Harvey P. Weingarten and Martin Hicks, *On Test: Skills, Summary of Findings from HEQCO’s Skills Assessment Pilot Studies* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario) 4.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Morneau Shepell, *Navigating Change* (Business Council of Canada, Spring 2018) 10.

⁵³ Ibid. 10.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to develop a working definition of professional development, as well as define a set of learning outcomes that could be associated with professional development.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide targeted funding to career services centres to increase the amount of opportunities for students to strengthen business etiquette and human skills development.

According to the Goodwill Community Foundation, business etiquette is a set of manners required in a profession that are important for creating a professional, mutually respectful atmosphere and allowing for an office to remain productive.⁵⁴ Developing business etiquette skills means students possess the ability to appropriately navigate a professional environment with confidence.

In a report published by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, the largest gap in professional skills for post-secondary graduates is in the area of business etiquette. This report evaluated the skills that graduates developed throughout their education versus the skills required in the workforce, and found that less than one-third of respondents believed they had sufficiently developed professional and business etiquette skills in their post-secondary education.⁵⁵ The report states that students repeatedly commented that they wished their program had provided them with opportunities to develop networking and communication skills with respect to speaking to prospective employers and the ability to draft a professional email.⁵⁶ The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario study revealed a gap between the skills students believe they will need after graduation, and the skills they developed throughout their post-secondary education.⁵⁷ This was particularly true for business etiquette, as only 30% of respondents claimed to have developed business etiquette skills, while 65% reported they would require them after graduation.⁵⁸ This clearly evidences an important gap in skills development.

In the same report, students responded that they used third-party platforms such as LinkedIn Learning to fill in the gaps in professional skills development that they were not receiving as part of their post-secondary education.⁵⁹ LinkedIn Learning, otherwise referred to as Lynda.com, is an open online learning platform designed to provide anyone with the opportunity to learn business, software, technology, and creative skills to achieve personal and professional goals.⁶⁰ The routine reporting by post-secondary students that the professional development opportunities available to them are insufficient clearly indicates that institutions need to be doing more in this area. Students who are enrolled in business-specific or business-related programs tend to receive more resources and opportunities for professional and business etiquette development.⁶¹ As a result, students in other programs graduate without the same opportunities to refine their professional skills.

Thus, OUSA recommends that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities provide more funding to career services centres to expand opportunities for students of all faculties in order to address the concern that non-business programs tend to have less opportunity for this skills development. Additionally, access to online platforms for students to develop these skills outside the classroom should be provided by reinstating the previously established open subscription to LinkedIn Learning. Further, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should develop a working definition of professional development to help set out relevant learning outcomes.

It is essential that post-secondary students develop the soft or human skills necessary to appropriately navigate and contribute effectively to the workforce. Soft-skills are personal attributes that enable

⁵⁴ "Business Etiquette," Goodwill Community Foundation, accessed February 7 2019, edu.gcfglobal.org/en/jobsuccess/business-etiquette/print

⁵⁵ Danielle Lenarcic Biss & Jackie Pichette, *Minding the Gap? Ontario Postsecondary Students' Perceptions on the State of Their Skills* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario) 7.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 8.

⁶⁰ Lynda.com, "About Us," Lynda.com - from LinkedIn, accessed March 2, 2019, <https://www.lynda.com/aboutus/>.

⁶¹ Danielle Lenarcic Biss & Jackie Pichette, *Minding the Gap? Ontario Postsecondary Students' Perceptions on the State of Their Skills* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario) 6.

someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people.⁶² Human skills are the qualities necessary for an individual to collaborate with others, work in teams, and understand those around them.⁶³ The term human skills, coined by Seth Godin, is often used in place of soft skills to avoid implications that these skills are easier to achieve or of lesser importance.⁶⁴

In the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario report, students identified certain transferrable skills that are required after graduation, specifically citing critical thinking, work ethic, time management, creative thinking, teamwork, and leadership as those that are essential in their area of work.⁶⁵ In each skills category listed, students reported at least a 20% gap in the number of skills developed during their post-secondary education and the level of skill required when employed.⁶⁶

In 2018, the Business Council of Canada conducted a skills survey and published the results in their report, “Navigating Change”. In this survey, *employers* responded to questions regarding the preparedness and adaptability of recent graduates. When asked about human skills, only 18.1% of respondents reported that they strongly agreed that recent graduates have the necessary human skills to succeed in the workforce.⁶⁷ Generally speaking, employers are currently less impressed with the human skills and basic business etiquette of new graduates. And while these reports indicate a growth in the area of human skills development, employers are still expecting more. Developing human skills is something that employers routinely claim is essential for post-secondary students. Thus, in order to ensure students are receiving the skills education that is expected by employers beyond technical skills, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should allocate funding so that institutions’ career centres can provide workshops and learning opportunities for students in the area of human skills.

CAREER SERVICES & SUPPORTS

Principle: Post-secondary institutions should provide students with the skills and tools necessary to succeed in the workforce.

Concern: Studies have shown that some students lack the ability to articulate the skills they have acquired in their post-secondary education.

Concern: Post-secondary students who do not have the opportunity to develop their own professional networks lack the ability to connect with professionals in their field.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide envelope funding for career services centres to expand programming and student supports.

Recommendation: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should work with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to establish a set of best practices for institutions’ career services centres around skills articulation and building their students’ ability to understand the technical and human skills they have developed.

Throughout their post-secondary experience, students are constantly considering the pathway and future of their career. Career centres and supports designed to assist students in this process are a fundamental campus service. Some students enter and leave their post-secondary education with a strong professional network, provided to them through personal connections built through their program or work experience.

⁶² Oxford Reference, s.v. “Soft Skills,” accessed February 7, 2019, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100516309>.

⁶³ Scott Stirrett, “It’s human skills – not technical skills – that we need the most in today’s work force,” *The Globe and Mail*, August 11, 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/talent/its-human-skills-not-technical-skills-that-we-need-the-most-in-todays-work-force/article35854379/>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Danielle Lenarcic Biss & Jackie Pichette, *Minding the Gap? Ontario Postsecondary Students’ Perceptions on the State of Their Skills* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario) 5.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Morneau Shepell, *Navigating Change* (Business Council of Canada, Spring 2018) 7.

However, some students may not have the opportunity to develop a professional network. There may be certain barriers faced that could hinder them from developing connections to established professionals, and consequently, may result in them having fewer career connections or opportunities for mentorship compared to other students. Moreover, many students are unable to articulate the skills they have developed in their post-secondary education to prospective employers.⁶⁸

With direction from the provincial government and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the establishment of a set of best practices would provide institutions with a guideline on how best to equip students with the ability to articulate their skills to employers. Strengthening and expanding the opportunities for network development and connections to alumni through career services centres would allow for all students, regardless of area of study or background, to connect with professionals in their field of interest.

SKILLS ARTICULATION POST-GRADUATION

Principle: All students should be able to convey the skills acquired through their post-secondary education and extracurricular experience upon entering the workforce.

Concern: Many recent graduates are unable to articulate the skills acquired through their undergraduate education and non-academic experience, (including extracurriculars, internships, and co-ops), to prospective employers.

Concern: Institutions do not have a sufficient system set in place to assist students in articulating their skillset post-graduation.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should establish a best practice model that post-secondary institutions may follow, that outlines how to convey the academic, oral, practical, and writing skills acquired through post-secondary education and extracurriculars.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should create a transition model for students moving from post-secondary into the workforce, in consultation with the Business Higher Education Roundtable and relevant business stakeholders. These stakeholders will help in addressing common challenges and outline accessible resources to support successful student transition into the workforce.

The share of total employment for university degree holders rose from 27% in 2004 to 34% in 2014.⁶⁹ Given the increase in value of a university degree in Ontario, it is crucial that students are able to critically convey their skills when entering the workforce. Post-secondary students must be able to articulate both their human skills and in-class skills to future employers. With communication, interpersonal, technological, critical, and creative thinking skills being at the forefront of what employers are looking for, the government must support students to better articulate these skills to employers.⁷⁰ Further, as professional development is a focus for many Ontario universities, stakeholders must assist students across the province in conveying these skills. With many students being involved both inside and outside the classroom through participation in internships, co-ops, and, extracurricular experiences, a shift to ensure that these skills are able to be demonstrated on paper is necessary to create a highly-skilled workforce.

The Government of Ontario should have a centralized model that ensures resources are accessible and there is an increase in support to institutions to aid in professional development. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should partner with various stakeholders to create a transition that

⁶⁸ The Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel, *Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility* (Office of the Premier, 2016).

⁶⁹ Renee Plziehn, *Skills Expected from Graduate Students in Search of Employment in Academic and Non-Academic Settings* (Alberta: Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Alberta, 2011).

⁷⁰ The Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel, *Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility* (Office of the Premier, 2016).

ensures post-secondary students are able to convey their skills and utilize the skills they learned through post-secondary education. When these tools are utilized and implemented effectively, students are much more likely to succeed post-graduation.

Various stakeholders such as the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Business/Higher Education Roundtable are critical to creating a best practice model that assists with the transition from post-secondary education into the workforce. The Business/Higher Education Roundtable represents some of Canada's largest companies and leading post-secondary institutions,⁷¹ giving it the capacity to coordinate strategies to strengthen the partnerships between workplaces and undergraduate students. The ability to adopt a critical lens with the support of various stakeholders helps in creating an effective transition model that combats the common challenges undergraduate students face upon graduating. Making these resources available to undergraduate students ensures that students are fully equipped with the appropriate resources to effectively transition from the post-secondary sphere to the workforce.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Principle: Every student pursuing entrepreneurship should have access to opportunities for industry engagement and commercialization.

Principle: Students and recent graduates should understand how small businesses and start-ups work as they pursue entrepreneurship.

Principle: Transparent and fair intellectual property rights agreements protect students involved in entrepreneurial ventures.

Concern: Many students with entrepreneurial goals have the innovative vision and production of intellectual property, but lack business resources and commercialized assistance.

Concern: Entrepreneurship disproportionately disadvantages individuals that do not have the financial stability to risk pursuing an entrepreneur opportunity.

Concern: Not all universities have strong protections for their students' intellectual property.

Concern: Foreign funding may have negative effects for the protection of intellectual property that is associated with entrepreneurial ventures.

Recommendation: The provincial government should lobby the federal government to continue partnering with universities, specifically in Ontario, to fund the inclusion of technology transfer officers in programs and faculties where they are needed most.

Recommendation: The government should provide financial incentives for the development of entrepreneurial hubs, incubators, and start-up initiatives on university campuses.

Recommendation: The provincial government should regulate intellectual property management standards to protect student researchers and incubator residents at universities.

⁷¹ "Home," Business/Higher Education Roundtable, accessed March 3, 2019, <http://bher.ca/>.

Students pursuing entrepreneurship face a considerable number of barriers during their undergraduate and post-graduate careers, specifically in terms of business resources and commercialization.⁷² Every qualified student pursuing entrepreneurship should have equal access to opportunities for industry engagement and commercialization. In addition, it is critical that these students and recent graduates pursuing entrepreneurship have a strong understanding of how small businesses operate.⁷³ Beyond this, transparent and fair intellectual property rights agreements help protect students involved in entrepreneurial ventures.

It is concerning that students often lack opportunities for industry engagement and commercialization, and that not all universities have strong protections for their students' intellectual property. Many students with entrepreneurial goals have both the production of intellectual property and innovative vision but lack the business resources and commercialized assistance to actualize their full potential. In a similar vein, it is important that foreign funding does not negatively affect the protection of intellectual property. For example, there was a case at the University of Waterloo where the university launched legal action against a former student to claim ownership of the student's intellectual property. One of the critical points in this case was the fact that the student created the intellectual property in a lab funded by an American company, Argonne National Laboratory, and as such the student's work was under contract to Argonne.⁵⁸ The lack of entrepreneurial support from universities and local communities in such cases further exacerbates the issue.

OUSA therefore asks the provincial government to regulate intellectual property management standards to protect student researchers and incubator residents at universities. Further, the provincial government should seek federal funding for the inclusion of technology transfer officers to assist entrepreneurial students in programs and faculties that can benefit the most. The role of technology transfer officers will be student-focused, specifically providing expert assistance for on-campus commercialization and analysis of intellectual property and the corresponding market potential. Additionally, OUSA believes that the federal government should provide financial incentives for the development of entrepreneurial hubs, incubators, and start-ups on university campuses.

ENTREPRENEURIAL RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Principle: Every student pursuing entrepreneurship in Ontario should have equal access to research opportunities that develop their business and professional skills.

Principle: Students demonstrate greater academic and professional performance as their research skills improve.

Principle: Entrepreneurial start-ups emphasize flexible core skills such as creativity, communications, teamwork, problem solving, and critical thinking as becoming increasingly important.

Concern: The availability of entrepreneurial research opportunities is disproportionate across academic programs, with a focus in STEM programs.

Concern: Internship programs are often narrowly focused on practical experience.

Concern: Students are not developing sufficient human skills that are often desired by employers.

⁷² Ken Tencer, "Halifax's Springboard program turns academics into entrepreneurs," *The Globe and Mail*, June 27, 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/sb-growth/halifaxs-springboard-program-transforms-academics-into-entrepreneurs/article35296361/>.

⁷³ "How vital is entrepreneurship to the future of Ontario?," Council of Ontario Universities, accessed January 17, 2019, <https://ontariosuniversities.ca/queens-entrepreneurship-roundtable/>.

⁵⁸ n.a., "University of Waterloo, former student in legal battle over invention," *CBC News*, March 2, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/legal-battle-between-university-of-waterloo-salient-energy-1.4847725>.

Recommendation: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should research and develop minimum standards of skill development for internship programs so that entrepreneurial students are best equipped for their ventures.

Recommendation: Internship programs should offer more opportunities for students to reflect on their experience, link course work with practical experience, and implement creative ideas into practice.

As students enter post-secondary education, OUSA believes that it is of utmost importance that they are offered the highest quality opportunities in order to excel in their professional, academic, and entrepreneurial development. Students benefit greatly in their academic and professional performance when they are afforded the opportunities to research directly in their field of study.⁷⁴ With that, every willing student should receive equal access to high-quality research opportunities where they can build and expand upon their entrepreneurial prowess and education.

The current government emphasizes employment, skills development, and adaptation.⁷⁵ To this end, OUSA believes that it is imperative for students to develop the flexible core skills that are increasingly emphasized by businesses and employers, including creativity, communications, teamwork, problem solving, and critical thinking.⁷⁶ OUSA is concerned that opportunities for students to enhance their entrepreneurial skills through research are disproportionate across programs, focusing primarily on STEM programs with less attention paid to developing these skills amongst students in other programs.

Further, research opportunities, specifically internships, are too narrowly focused on practical experience which leaves less room for students to develop the human skills that are increasingly valued in the economy.⁷⁷ In response, OUSA recommends that the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario research and develop minimum skills development standards for internship programs so that entrepreneurial students are properly equipped for their ventures. OUSA also recommends that internship programs offer more opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences and link course work with practical experience, as well as provide students with more creative freedom in bringing ideas into practice.

WORK TERM GRANTS

Principle: Every qualified student with a work term placement should have access to grant funding for required travel and living arrangements.

Principle: Work term programs that receive non-repayable funding provide students with a more accessible means to attain entrepreneurial experience.

Principle: Co-op students provide benefit to businesses through their level of energy, academic, and professional skills, positively adding to businesses and corporate culture.

Concern: Many students do not have the finances to afford a work term placement, many of which are unpaid.

Concern: Many students do not have the opportunity to receive work experience in their related field prior to entering the workforce.

⁷⁴ “Benefits of Undergraduate Research,” Office of Undergraduate Research, accessed January 17, 2019, <https://undergradresearch.wustl.edu/getting-started/benefits-ur>.

⁷⁵ Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, *Published Plans and Annual Reports 2017-2018: Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development* (Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2017), updated February 20, 2019.

⁷⁶ Council of Ontario Universities, *Partnering for a Better Future in Ontario* (Toronto, ON: Council of Ontario Universities, 2017).

⁷⁷ Ahad Bandealy, Anthony Battaglia, Ashley Stirling, Ellen MacPherson, Gretchen Kerr & Jenessa Banwell, “Do Postsecondary Internships Address the Four Learning Modes of Experiential Learning Theory? An Exploration through Document Analysis,” *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 47, (November 2017): 27-48.

Recommendation: The provincial government should continue to provide envelope funding to create and maintain work integrated learning programs that focus on innovation and cultural change.

Recommendation: The provincial government should provide funding for students who require travel and living arrangements for their work term placements.

Recommendation: The provincial government should incentivize partnerships between universities and local and regional businesses to establish unique work integrated learning programs with present grant funding.

It is critical that work term placements are of the highest quality, particularly for undergraduates seeking entrepreneurship. This will ensure that students are receiving the best opportunity to develop their entrepreneurial skills. To this end, every qualified student in Ontario should have access to non-repayable funding for work term placement opportunities that require the student to make travel and living arrangements. This would contribute to equal access for all students to attain entrepreneurial experience.⁷⁸

Co-op students provide unique value to businesses and their corporate culture due to their level of imagination and innovation.⁷⁹ At the same time, co-op students benefit from work term experiences which enhance both their academic and professional skills. However, given the fact that many work term placements are unpaid, many students cannot afford to take on these opportunities. Further, many students do not have opportunities to receive work experience in their related field prior to entering the workforce. In response, OUSA recommends that the government provide envelope funding for entrepreneurial work integrated learning programs, such as that offered at Simon Fraser University which benefited from the \$1.9 million in funding provided by the British Columbian government to public universities, colleges, and institutes across the province.⁸⁰ The provincial government should also incentivize universities, as well as local and regional businesses, to establish work integrated learning partnerships with existing grant funding. In addition, the provincial government should provide grant funding for students who are required to make travel and living arrangements for their work term placements.

EMPLOYMENT & LABOUR PROTECTIONS

⁷⁸ n.a, "Government Invests in Tech Entrepreneurship Program at SFU," *Teradici-Net*, December 6, 2016, <https://www.bctechnology.com/news/2016/12/6/Government-Invests-in-Tech-Entrepreneurship-Program-at-SFU.cfm>.

⁷⁹ Steven Murphy, "Want your company to be more innovative? Hire co-op students," *The Globe and Mail*, July 27, 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/leadership-lab/want-your-company-to-be-more-innovative-hire-co-op-students/article35779536/>.

⁸⁰ n.a, "Government Invests in Tech Entrepreneurship Program at SFU," *Teradici-Net*, December 6, 2016, <https://www.bctechnology.com/news/2016/12/6/Government-Invests-in-Tech-Entrepreneurship-Program-at-SFU.cfm>; "Helping Students Succeed Through Work-integrated Learning," Government of British Columbia, accessed March 21, 2019, <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018AEST0100-001443>.

INCLUSION OF STUDENTS IN THE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT

Principle: Students engaging in any type of work placement or co-op term should have the same rights as any other Ontario worker.

Concern: Students are not included under the Employment Standards Act.

Concern: The exemption of students from the Employment Standards Act leads to confusion surrounding students' rights when pursuing a work placement or co-op term.

Concern: The exemption of students from the Employment Standards Act could leave students open for cases of exploitation and unfair treatment in the workplace.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Ministry of Labour to update the Employment Standards Act to include students to have to the same rights as Ontario workers.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Ministry of Labour to create a guide outlining students' rights in the workplace.

The Employment Standards Act (ESA), provides a minimum standard for employees' work conditions in Ontario.⁸¹ The ESA contains provisions on topics including, but not limited to, hours of work, eating and rest periods, overtime pay, minimum wage, equal pay for equal work, sick leave, as well as public holidays.⁸² The ESA provides employees with a body of legislation to ensure their rights are upheld. All workers should have rights and be entitled to a fair workplace, including students engaging in any type of work placement or co-op term.

Currently, the ESA includes a provision excluding "individuals performing work under a program approved by a college of applied arts and technology or university."⁸³ This provision excludes university students pursuing co-op terms, internships, or work placements from protection under the ESA. The exemption of students from the ESA causes confusion about student rights, leaving them vulnerable and open to potential exploitation and mistreatment in the workplace. A study conducted by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario revealed that employers also face confusion as to whether students on work placements are included under the provisions of the ESA and, consequently, what their rights are.⁸⁴ However, while students are not covered under the ESA, in 2014 they were included in the definition of workers under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which gives students: (1) the right to refuse unsafe work; (2) the right to participate in health and safety activities in the workplace; and (3) the right to know or be informed of dangers in the workplace.⁸⁵

In order to help students realize their rights in the workplace, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Ministry of Labour to include students pursuing work terms or placements within the provisions of the ESA. This would clarify the confusion surrounding students' rights in the workplace. Additionally, in order to gain further insight into student rights while on work terms, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, should develop a guide outlining students' rights while on work placement to be referenced by students, employers, and institutions' co-op centers.

⁸¹ "Your Guide to the Employment Standards Act," Government of Ontario, accessed February 2, 2019, <https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-o>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Joseph F. Turcotte, Leslie Nichols & Lisa Philipps, *Maximizing Opportunity Mitigating Risk: Aligning Law, Policy and Practice to Strengthen Work-Integrated Learning in Ontario* (Toronto, ON: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2016).

⁸⁵ "Expanded Definition of Worker Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act," Ontario Ministry of Labour, accessed February 3, 2019, <https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/worker.php>.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RETENTION & SUPPORTS

Principle: The government should retain international students to address declining workforces across Ontario.

Principle: International students should be able to pursue career paths in the place of study by having the adequate transition tools necessary to succeed after graduating.

Principle: International students should be able to receive the same employment opportunities as domestic students.

Concern: Many international students are often unable to remain in Ontario due to the inability to retain a visa and permits post-graduation.

Concern: Certain fields require security clearances that are disproportionately difficult for international students to receive.

Concern: The lack of international student support and transition tools during the undergraduate degree may lead to a lack of retention in the place of study.

Concern: Many international students are unaware of the processes in place to ensure residency post-graduation.

Concern: International students attending university in Ontario should not be faced with barriers that will prevent them from staying in Ontario.

Recommendation: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should conduct research about the various challenges that interfere with international students integrating into the workforce.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services should work with the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to create a process that aids in the process of attaining work visas and permits during university in order to ensure that future employment is not hindered for students.

Recommendation: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should work with the government to create a best practice model to provide international students with academic, social, and cultural support and help them tackle integration challenges.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide envelope funding to institutions to create services that support international students in Ontario to ensure that post-graduation retention is manageable.

Recommendation: The provincial government should work in collaboration with the federal government to solve issues related to retaining a visa or permit after graduation in order to streamline the process.

Recommendation: The provincial government should lobby the federal government to ensure that security clearances are not unduly difficult for international students to receive.

Enrollment of international students in Canadian educational institutions has rapidly increased over the last decade. Aligning with the previous Ontario government's promise to increase international enrollment, undergraduate enrollment from international students increased more than 119% between 2010 and 2018.⁸⁶ The motivators behind increasing international enrollment stems from the need to

⁸⁶ Victoria Esses, Alina Sutter, Alejandro Ortiz, Nin Luo, Jean Cui & Lisa Deacon, *Retaining International Students in Canada Post-Graduation: Understanding the Motivations and Drivers of the Decision to Stay* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2018).

foster a more multicultural, diverse, global perspective in post-secondary education. Further, as domestic tuition costs have become regulated, institutions increasingly rely on international students as a source of institutional revenue. Currently, international students contribute \$12.8 billion (accounting for Canadian scholarships and bursaries) to economic activities in Canada.⁸⁷

In regions where there is a declining labour force, international students are a source of highly-skilled labour that contribute to the growth and prosperity of the workforce.⁸⁸ However, despite the large economic contribution international students provide to Canada, the ability to retain international students post-graduation is a persistent issue.

In order to promote higher retention rates, it is critical to understand and combat the various challenges international students face when deciding to stay in Canada following graduation. Intentions to apply for permanent residency are dependent on demographic, economic, and socio-cultural variables.⁸⁹ Given that many international students identify positive integration strategies as necessary, such methods must be consistently applied to assist international students to be able to contribute to a highly-skilled labour force. Currently, institutions do not have a consistent model to follow or learn from that prioritizes student retention. Additionally, international students are hindered by the inability to continue to work post-graduation due to the hurdles that arise when attempting to acquire a work-visa or permit, particularly given the complex processes involved. Further, in certain fields, security clearances may be required that are disproportionately difficult for international students to receive.⁹⁰

The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration should therefore work in tandem with various undergraduate stakeholders to ensure that the process for international students to remain and work in the province post-graduation is adequate and comprehensive. At the same time, the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services should work with the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to create a process that aids international students in the process of attaining work visas and permits during their university career in order to ensure that their future employment is not hindered. Additionally, the Higher Education Council of Ontario should conduct research on the barriers that international students face when transitioning to work after graduation. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should also work with the provincial government to create a best practice model on how to best support international students academically, socially, and culturally. Finally, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide envelope funding to institutions to create services that support international students in Ontario to ensure that post-graduation retention is manageable.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Clayton Smith & Tanya Demjanenko, *The International Student Retention Puzzle* (Windsor, ON: University of Windsor, 2011).

⁹⁰ Moira MacDonald, "The push to bridge the school-work gap," *University Affairs*, March 7, 2018, <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/push-bridge-school-work-gap/>.

POLICY STATEMENT

Whereas: Work integrated learning opportunities should be available to all interested and qualified students.

Whereas: Work integrated learning opportunities should be available to students across all disciplines.

Whereas: All willing and qualified students should have the ability to access co-operative learning opportunities.

Whereas: Enough co-operative learning opportunities should exist in order to ensure that all eligible students in co-op programs are able to secure work placements.

Whereas: Students should be properly compensated for their contributions to a workplace.

Whereas: Mandatory unpaid placements should not deter students from pursuing the program of their choice.

Whereas: Unpaid internships or work opportunities should not place additional financial burden on students.

Whereas: Students should have the ability to pursue opportunities in the workplace in order to build networks and connections to aid in securing employability post-graduation.

Whereas: Students pursuing work integrated learning opportunities should have wellness supports that are easily accessible to students.

Whereas: Students should be prepared and have an understanding of work placement demands prior to beginning any form of work integrated learning opportunity.

Whereas: Students should be able to use their skills to improve and work in their communities.

Whereas: Institutions should be providing students with the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to develop in their field of work.

Whereas: Institutions should be able to adapt to the changes in the workforce and provide students with access to resources to develop current and in-demand skills.

Whereas: Post-secondary students should have access to opportunities to develop high-demand skill areas that will be necessary in all fields of work, regardless of area of study.

Whereas: Post-secondary graduates should finish their education not only with an ability to contribute to the workforce, but with an ability to manage their personal lives; including organizing their personal finances and planning for their future.

Whereas: Post-secondary students across all faculties, including STEM programs, should have access to opportunities to expand and develop their communication skills.

Whereas: A post-secondary education should provide its graduates with the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to be successful in their chosen field of work.

Whereas: Post-secondary students within all faculties and departments should have access to clear opportunities for professional development.

Whereas: Post-secondary graduates should enter the workforce well-prepared to interact with both employers and colleagues in a professional manner.

Whereas: Human skills should be equally as valued as technical skills.

Whereas: Post-secondary institutions should provide students with the skills and tools necessary to succeed in the workforce.

Whereas: All students should be able to convey the skills acquired through their post-secondary education and extracurricular experience upon entering the workforce.

Whereas: Every student pursuing entrepreneurship should have access to opportunities for industry engagement and commercialization.

Whereas: Students and recent graduates should understand how small businesses and start-ups work as they pursue entrepreneurship.

Whereas: Transparent and fair intellectual property rights agreements protect students involved in entrepreneurial ventures.

Whereas: Every student pursuing entrepreneurship in Ontario should have equal access to research opportunities that develop their business and professional skills.

Whereas: Students demonstrate greater academic and professional performance as their research skills improve.

Whereas: Entrepreneurial start-ups emphasize flexible core skills such as creativity, communications, teamwork, problem solving, and critical thinking as becoming increasingly important.

Whereas: Every qualified student with a work term placement should have access to grant funding for required travel and living arrangements.

Whereas: Work term programs that receive non-repayable funding provide students with a more accessible means to attain entrepreneurial experience.

Whereas: Co-op students provide benefit to businesses through their level of energy, academic, and professional skills, positively adding to businesses and corporate culture.

Whereas: Students engaging in any type of work placement or co-op term should have the same rights as any other Ontario worker.

Whereas: The government should retain international students to address declining workforces across Ontario.

Whereas: International students should be able to pursue career paths in the place of study by having the adequate transition tools necessary to succeed after graduating.

Whereas: International students should be able to receive the same employment opportunities as domestic students.

Be it resolved that: The provincial government should provide investments in the Career Ready Fund to incentivize employers to increase opportunities for disciplines and programs of study that currently lack work integrated learning opportunities such as general arts and sciences.

Be it further resolved that (BIFRT): The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should collaborate with the Council of Ontario Universities in order to create a targeted framework for high-quality work integrated learning opportunities for all areas of study.

BIFRT: The provincial government should incentivize employers to hire co-op students with the option of reverting existing tax credits provided for co-op students into upfront grants.

BIFRT: The provincial government should create envelope funding to support the creation of meaningful, relevant co-operative learning opportunities in small businesses and not for profit organizations.

BIFRT: The provincial government should continue investing in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and University's Career Ready Fund in order to increase co-operative education programs.

BIFRT: The provincial government should provide envelope funding for institutions to pursue flexible work terms.

BIFRT: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should conduct research on mandatory unpaid placements in Ontario, in order to assess program quality and affordability.

BIFRT: The provincial government should create a grant that students pursuing program-mandatory placements can access for travel and accommodations.

BIFRT: The province should ban accreditation bodies from requiring or supporting unpaid placements.

BIFRT: The provincial government should discourage institutions and employers from allowing unpaid work placements.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Ministry of Labour to revisit the Employment Standards Act, and ensure that all internships, that are not required for academic accreditation, are guaranteed to receive fair compensation.

BIFRT: While the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities works toward addressing the gaps that allow for unpaid internships to exist, they should establish guidelines that ensure that students in an unpaid internship should not be required to work more than 37.5 hours per week.

BIFRT: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should develop a best practice system on how best university co-op/experiential learning centres can prepare and inform students of the demands and pressures of their placements.

BIFRT: The Council of Ontario Universities should develop a best practice system on how best university co-op/experiential learning centres can inform students on how to access wellness resources in the case they are pursuing out of town work terms.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should collaborate with the Ministry of Labour to encourage that co-op and workplaces give students an allotted number of personal days throughout their term.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide faculty incentives to develop meaningful community service learning courses.

BIFRT: The Council of Ontario Universities, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, and Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations should create a best practice system for administering community service learning based courses.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should perform a triennial review of the report published in 2016 by the Premier's Highly-Skilled Workforce Panel to ensure that undergraduate students are learning the necessary skills for the evolving workforce.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should adopt official definitions for both financial literacy and numeracy.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should establish a set of best practices for institutions to provide a combination cross-faculty access to courses and open resources that will provide students with the necessary skills of financial literacy and numeracy.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should include strong communication skills as a priority within the Highly Skilled Workforce Panel review.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide targeted funding on a per use basis for resources such as writing centres and online learning platforms in order for students to develop their communication skills.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should maintain the previously established open subscription to LinkedIn Learning, an open online resource, where post-secondary students are able to take courses and develop necessary skills.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to develop a working definition of professional development, as well as define a set of learning outcomes that could be associated with professional development.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide targeted funding to career services centres to increase the amount of opportunities for students to strengthen business etiquette and human skills development.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide envelope funding for career services centres to expand programming and student supports.

BIFRT: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should work with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to establish a set of best practices for institutions' career services centres around skills articulation and building their students' ability to understand the technical and human skills they have developed.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should establish a best practice model that post-secondary institutions may follow, that outlines how to convey the academic, oral, practical, and writing skills acquired through post-secondary education and extracurriculars.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should create a transition model for students moving from post-secondary into the workforce, in consultation with the Business Higher Education Roundtable and relevant business stakeholders. These stakeholders will help in addressing common challenges and outline accessible resources to support successful student transition into the workforce.

BIFRT: The provincial government should lobby the federal government to continue partnering with universities, specifically in Ontario, to fund the inclusion of technology transfer officers in programs and faculties where they are needed most.

BIFRT: The government should provide financial incentives for the development of entrepreneurial hubs, incubators, and start-up initiatives on university campuses.

BIFRT: The provincial government should regulate intellectual property management standards to protect student researchers and incubator residents at universities.

BIFRT: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should research and develop minimum standards of skill development for internship programs so that entrepreneurial students are best equipped for their ventures.

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BIFRT: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario should work with the government to create a best practice model to provide international students with academic, social, and cultural support and help them tackle integration challenges.

BIFRT: The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should provide envelope funding to institutions to create services that support international students in Ontario to ensure that post-graduation retention is manageable.

BIFRT: The provincial government should work in collaboration with the federal government to solve issues related to retaining a visa or permit after graduation in order to streamline the process.

BIFRT: The provincial government should lobby the federal government to ensure that security clearances are not unduly difficult for international students to receive.