

Higher Education Task Force

IDAHO
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Work Based Learning - The Co-op Model

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The Match between Education and Employment

Students - barriers to post-secondary education

- Access and affordability
- Proven value and relevance

Employers – experiences with graduates

- Lack of career readiness
- Skills match – the real issue
- Other issues
 - Student-to-business awareness
 - Retention of graduates in Idaho

Work-Based Learning as A Solution

- Project-based learning
- Internships
- Co-op
 - Examples in the US
 - University of Cincinnati – 1800 co-op students across 45 majors with >1500 participating employers
 - 95 percent of co-op students have jobs immediately upon graduation
 - Oregon – MECOP (Multiple Engineering Co-op Program)
 - Oregon State, Portland State, Oregon Tech and Univ. of Portland
 - 5 year degree, two 6-month placements
 - ~150 participating employers
 - Drexel – 1600 employers
 - Students do 3 work terms of 6 months each
 - Average work term pay is \$16k
 - Northeastern
 - University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

The University of Waterloo

Background Information

- 19,000 co-op students with >7,000 participating employers
- Region had only 50 tech firms in 1997 - now >1,000 that collectively generate ~\$37 billion in annual revenue
- Google, SAP, other tech companies have built large local offices to access Waterloo students
- Waterloo is 2nd biggest supplier of Silicon Valley talent despite being 3000 miles away
- Most eventually return, many start companies

The University of Waterloo

How does the Waterloo Co-op work?

- Undergraduate students complete at least one semester of core courses, then alternate between school semesters and work semesters – work time = 30-50% of academic time
- During work semesters, students are FTEs at participating employers - can relocate as needed
- Universities facilitate match-making, logistics
- Students expected to graduate in 5 years with up to 2 years of full-time employment experience across multiple employers

The University of Waterloo

Other key points about the Waterloo so-op program

- 20-to-1 applicant acceptance ratio
- Required for engineering majors
- Some internships promote entrepreneurship
- Staff support – 173 people
- Employers required to follow strict guidelines

The Co-Op Model

Benefit to business community

- Access to recruits, especially from distant universities
- Workforce development – attract top students to universities/employers and integrate them into companies
- Predictability – employers can create and fill meaningful FTE positions with established duties rather than odd-job internships with limited, erratic hours
- Magnet for new business investment and start-ups

The Co-Op Model

Benefit to students

- Ability to work anywhere in the state
- No need to balance school with work
- Top-quality, career-relevant jobs lined up
- Pay for school - Waterloo model - students generally graduate debt-free with all expenses covered as they go
- Better understanding of relevance of classwork
- Opportunity to sample different jobs / employers / locations
- Graduate with vastly better workplace skills, higher earning potential, better job opportunities