



Work-Integrated Learning Leads to Career-Ready Students: Report

Toronto, November 23, 2011 – University-organized work opportunities, such as co-op programs and research/teaching assistantships, have a strong impact on Canadian students' critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and career preparation, a new study of Canadian work-integrated-learning reveals.

Students who pursued co-op programs, internships or research assistantships were considerably more likely than their peers to report that their work provided a better appreciation of concepts learned in the classroom and their application in the real world, the study, conducted by Higher Education Strategy Associates, reveals.

"Co-op programs, as well as research assistantships, provided students with the strongest opportunities to augment learning through labour force participation and to prepare for their eventual full transition from school to work," said Alex Usher, President of Higher Education Strategy Associates and co-author of the report, *Work-integrated Learning and Career-ready students: Examining the Evidence*. "Research assistantships, in particular, can provide the same kind of benefits as co-op programs in fields of study where work-integrated learning is less common."

The survey, conducted among 2,148 university students who participate in the CanEd Student Research Panel, reports on their perceived impact of various job opportunities, including co-op placements, research and teaching assistantships, internships, volunteer postings, summer work, and other work during the school year.

In some cases, internships and volunteer opportunities provided students with the same kind of added value associated with co-op and other structured work-integrated learning. Summer jobs, which were the most common form of work, provided the least benefit as far as reinforcing academic concepts or career preparation was concerned, except in certain cases.

"This has interesting policy implications when you consider how institutions can best use their resources to prepare students for the workforce," said Miriam Kramer, co-author of the report. "Employment opportunities during school that are related to students' fields of study reinforce classroom learning and could lead to better career options for graduating students."

The report is available free online at www.higheredstrategy.com.

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