



POLICY PAPER

Experiential Education

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Introduction

Student employment and access to high quality and accessible experiential learning opportunities are issues of increasing importance to students, universities and the government.¹ From these experiences students gain opportunity to what is increasingly become essential skill development, financial compensation, and connections to the work force. Recognizing their importance the premier has committed to providing one Work Integrated Learning opportunity to every student in Post-Secondary Education.² This policy focuses on what these opportunities should look like and how students can access high quality career and experiential learning opportunities.

The role of career and cooperative education services at McMaster is discussed in terms of accessibility, outreach, and training. With the ultimate goal of creating, curating, and advertising high quality and field related opportunities to students as well as ensuring students are adequately prepared to apply for these positions. Additionally, the importance of co-curriculars as a mechanism for skill development is discussed and recommendations on the resources available to students to communicate their skill development are put forward.

A large part of allowing students to develop and specialize in the workforce, is allowing them autonomy and self direction. For many students entrepreneurship presents the perfect opportunity to grow and challenge themselves while building on their studies. However, these opportunities can be scarce, underfunded, and targeted to specific disciplines over others. Further investment in the funding and universality of entrepreneurship services is discussed.

Students should have access to experiential education opportunities through their courses. Many programs already offer such courses, but they are often limited to those enrolled in specific programs. This paper outlines this importance of programs and facilities creating and expanding these learning opportunities to increase students' access.

Lastly, the role of government regulation and investment as well as access to funding is discussed. The role of the city and the university in preparing and funding students in community engaged experiential education and employment opportunities is outlined as a priority. The provincial government is asked to close legislative loopholes in the Employment Standards Act that would prevent students' labour from being unprotected. All levels of government are asked to increase the availability of employment opportunities, and for accessibility and efficiency to be prioritized in

¹ "Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility | Ontario.ca." n.d. Accessed October 31, 2017. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/building-workforce-tomorrow-shared-responsibility>.

² Ibid.

application and funding procedures. Finally, disparities in McMaster's Work-Study Program qualification criteria are explored.

Career and Co-op Services

Online Job Boards

Principle: Career and Co-op services should effectively communicate to students to inform them of the job opportunities that are available.

Concern: Students are not receiving adequate notice of career opportunities.

Concern: The current method of online job board postings may not be accessible to all students or all employers.

Recommendation: Co-op and Career services job boards should adhere to a standard of at least two weeks allowance between opening and closing job postings.

Recommendation: Co-op and Career services should better promote to students.

Recommendation: Improve search filters to enable clarity surrounding necessary qualifications.

Recommendation: Explore more holistic tactics for promotion outside of online job boards.

Recommendation: Co-op and Career services should expand its job board partnership outreach to accommodate for organizations without access to online resources.

Recommendation: Better access to computer services and software applications at Mac.

Effective communication is in the best interest for all parties, students and employers, in finding the best fit for filling professional positions. By improving this communication, all students will have equal access to opportunities, meaning the most qualified, best suited candidates can be selected by employers. It is important that Career and Co-op services focus more efforts on this effective communication to all students so as to best inform them of job opportunities that are available.

Students are not receiving adequate notice of career opportunities. Postings may not be available early enough for students to see and respond to opportunities effectively within their already busy schedules. Additionally, the current job board systems supported by McMaster University does not provide alerts or differentiation for new job postings, as well as allow older ones to linger. Time may be spent on an application that is no longer viable; time which for a student is very important to be made effective for successful employment. The current model is a difficult to use platform where opportunities can be lost simply due to protracted action in taking down old or filled postings and a lack of alerts to new ones.

Additionally, the method itself of using solely an online platform for job opportunity sharing is not accessible to all students or employers. Many students may not have reliable and continual access to a computer, internet, office software necessary for applying to specialty positions requiring expensive applications such as photoshop, coding systems, etc. (**SUBSTANTIATE**). This is a large barrier to a small demographic of students. Additionally, for some small community organizations, online promotion for

needed positions may be difficult. For example, some community garden initiatives, or small neighbour associations, etc. have grants for research that could use student workers but don't have the means or resources to promote these opportunities online.

To address these barriers limiting access to employment, Co-op and Career services job boards should adhere to a standard of at least two weeks allowance between opening and closing job postings ([CITE](#)). Additionally, there should be quick removal of non-viable postings, so that students do not waste time applying to them, or become overwhelmed or discouraged by a confusingly erratic number of job postings ([CITE](#)).

Co-op and Career services should also better promote to students the existence of job postings in an effective manner. An example of this would be alerting certain student groups when relevant opportunities are available in a significantly high volume. General promotions done through student groups on campus for better outreach to more niche constituents could also be helpful.

Along this thread, improving search filters to enable clarity surrounding necessary qualifications would be a great way to streamline the current job search process at McMaster supported online applications. Having filters that can be applied along the categories of degree type/level, amount and types of experience, number of working hours, general field of study, organization, etc. This will help students to find the most relevant employers and cut time from the application process. It will also help to engage students as the current process tends to disillusion some from returning to the job hunt ([SUBSTANTIATE](#)).

To make the whole application process more accessible, and to improve general promotion for these opportunities, Career and Co-op Services should explore more holistic tactics for promotion outside of online job boards. Having more in-house events that are better promoted through non-online sources (posters, booths, etc.) could reach out to those outside the users of the current system; like those without adequate access to computer services and software applications at Mac. This may also increase the credibility of the online system and give students a forum for questions and feedback. More could be done by the University itself. Library computer services are adequate but not available at all times, and only Lyons Media Centre can accommodate for special requests in terms of computer applications. Having an application process for access to a computer lab or computer application for students at McMaster University could be an acceptable way to address this issue.

Co-op and Career services should expand its job board partnership outreach to accommodate for organizations without access to online resources. This would expand the amount of opportunities available to students, and it would also allow community organizations and grassroots programs to engage with the current process in a more

accessible way. This would also help students with aspirations of community engaged research to more easily find work.

By implementing these solutions, the University will be able to create more inclusive, effective online job boards as well as sustainable relationships with new community partners. By having the largest pool of applicants possible applying to the most relevant positions, students and employers alike will benefit from these proposals.

(De?)Centralization of Resources

*****Note the following two sets of PCRS contradicts. We'll be hearing feedback at policy con on preferred recommendations*****

Principle: All students should have access to specialized career opportunities related to their field of study

Concern: Current job postings don't effectively inform students of jobs related to their field of study, inhibiting their ability to find meaningful career opportunities due to the high volume of unrelated content.

Recommendation: Support the decentralization of current job boards to specific faculty/program career services to facilitate succinct, quality job postings.

Recommendation: The University should provide specific resources through the Student Success Centre for those in niche fields where there aren't enough specific jobs available for effective decentralization.

To effectively compete in the modern labour force, a student must have somewhat specialized experience (volunteer or work-related) in their field of study (**SUBSTANTIATE**). To this end, the University should effectively facilitate the connection of students to related field opportunities through existing structures.

Current job postings don't effectively inform students of jobs related to their field of study, inhibiting their ability to find meaningful career opportunities due to the high volume of unrelated content. The University's two most popularized job platforms are conveyed through MOSAIC and "OscarPlus" do not contain useful search filters for amount of hours required, sequence sorting categories, as well as specific degrees and disciplines. Things like application deadlines, position types and employment categories which are available on OscarPlus, are not available on MOSAIC.

To streamline the job search process, the University should support the decentralization of current job boards to specific faculty/program career services to facilitate succinct, quality job postings that are most relevant to the fields of students under their purview. For those in niche fields where there aren't enough specific jobs available for effective decentralization, specific resources should be provided through

the Student Success Centre in the form of networking events and workshops. In this way, students will have a more specific personalized approach to their employment needs from their faculty and have the most relevant opportunities readily available.

Principle: The University should effectively facilitate the connection of students to career opportunities as efficiently as possible without undue repetition between different networks..

Concern: Current job board programs are not adequately connecting students to opportunities due to a lack of connection and centralization.

Recommendation: The University should provide a centralized community engaged platform for career opportunity services to increase the centralization of existing job boards.

Students only have a certain amount of time to spend on job applications. To this end, the University should effectively facilitate the connection of students to related field opportunities as efficiently as possible so as to increase the amount of students applying for employment, and to ensure employers are accessing the most relevant pool of applicants.

Current job boards can display an overlap of many postings, with some outliers for each. This can be exhausting for students to pick out individual different postings by scanning numerous online job boards to find specific exceptions. The University should (also?) provide a centralized community engaged platform for career opportunity services to combat repetitive postings through a common network. These platforms are not adequately connecting students to opportunities due to a lack of connection and centralization.

To remedy this, the University should use a method of increased centralization of job boards by utilizing/partnering with other local systems with similar mandates, (such as Magnet, for example) to increase pool of opportunities and collect into one point of access for students seeking jobs. This would both eliminate the repetition of postings, and help to define best practices and opportunities for students through a wider net of participants.

Training

Principle: Co-op and Career Services should offer adequate training to students on how to write grant applications

Concern: Current services do not adequately train students on this valuable skill, meaning many students do not receive necessary funding for their education.

Recommendation: Co-op and Career Services should run a Grant Writing 1A03 event where students can learn and implement grant writing skills.

Recommendation: Any existing workshops that currently train students in grant writing should be better promoted to engage more students.

There are number of benefits associated with grants, just the process of applying for grants itself is a learning experience. It is a great way to develop a research proposal, expand your professional network and most importantly as a student lower financial burden. About 36% of students in Ontario reported receiving non-repayable funding in the form of scholarships, grants, bursaries, scholarships or contributions from non-family individuals; at the median, these sources provided \$1,600 in funding.³ The past decade has been a period of great change for the post institutions in Canada. Tuition fees have been risen and so have the non-educational cost of attending university/college. Therefore, it is important that students are given proper access to such resources and educate them on writing grant applications.

One of the biggest issues with receiving grants, is first educating students about various grants that are available and second the process of writing a grant application. Students lack this vital skill, that can help them but not only receive beneficial grants but also establish connections. Co-op and Career Services as mentioned earlier, are not promoting their workshops efficiently. Meaning most students either don't hear about the service/workshop or show lack of interest in such events. Social media should be properly utilized, this includes Twitter, Facebook, YouTube videos, providing prizes by participating in online surveys/contests etc. in addition, it is important to cater these workshops for students from all disciplines. This way every faculty is targeted and hence a better event turn out. In addition, flyer/poster should be placed in locations that students use the most. For example: Student Center, washroom advertisements, BSB, outside GO Bus stations etc. another recommendation is to hold run a Grant Writing 1A03 event, with the goal of educating students about grant writing process. There should be graduate students or key note speakers that can give their inside tips on writing an efficient application.

Transition

Principle: Co-op and Career Services should prepare all students for a smooth transition from academia to entering the workforce after University.

Concern: Students feel that the current structures in place to try and facilitate this transition are not adequate.

Recommendation: Better promote Career Fairs and improve access to all students.

Recommendation: Develop a Transition Out of Uni Conference early in the year (Level III and IV for those not completing their degree with honours) to prepare students for entering the workforce.

³ "Access, persistence and financing: First results from the Postsecondary Education Participation Survey (PEPS)." Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics – Research Papers. Statistics Canada Catalogue number 81-595-MIE2003007, free.

Co-op programs alternate periods of study with work placements, offering students a structured approach that integrates their academic studies with work experiences in a related field. A longitudinal study was done among 20,000 university graduates it was found that co-op graduates earned salaries 22.2% higher than those of their non-co-op peers in their first year in the workforce.⁴ University co-op graduates have also been found to be less likely to be overqualified for their jobs.⁵ In addition, earnings and employment rates are significantly higher among Canadian university co-op graduates.⁶ Co-op programs help students to get an idea of what work after post graduate studies look like, help preparing them for life after university. The importance of Co-op is evident in undergraduate studies and thereafter is evident. Nevertheless, the issue is that current structures in place to facilitate this transition from university to workforce is not adequate.

There are many services and workshops being provided by co-op and career services that provide a learning space for students. The learning space refers not just to a physical location, but also the social environment in which a WIL program takes place. Creating an effective learning space entails constructive assessment that enables students to learn and improve, as well as quality mentorship from individuals who understand the program's goals. These services and workshops are not inclusive of individuals who commute or have a sort of disability. It is our institutional aspiration to work towards campus that adopts to the social definition of disability by responding with creating events/workshops that fulfills the needs of everybody. This also includes holding events that are not just restricted from 9am–4pm. For commuters, it is already hard to access to on campus resources and events. Therefore, it is important to be considerate of timings when holding career fairs/workshops. In addition, as mentioned earlier services should be encouraged to hold more and better promoted job/career fairs on campus for student convenience. Social media should be properly utilized, this includes Twitter, Facebook, YouTube videos, providing prizes by participating in online surveys/contests etc.

In addition, Transition Out of University Conference should be implemented early in the year (Level III and IV for those not completing their degree with honours). This goal of this conference should be to help students transition out of university into actual

⁴ Drysdale, M., Goyder, J., and Cardy, A. (2009). The Transition from University to the Labour Market: The Role of Cooperative Education – Phase 3. Powerpoint presentation to Cooperative Education and Internship Association Annual Conference, April 2009, Portland.

⁵ Downey, J., Kalbfleisch, J., Truman, R. (2002). Co-operative Education: Greater Benefits, Greater Costs. Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Toronto, Retrieved August 16, 2016 from <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-advancement-co-operative-education/sites/ca.centre-advancement-co-operative-education/files/uploads/files/CostBenefitCo-opStudyFinal.pdf>.

⁶ Bayard, J. and Greenlee, E. (2009) Graduating in Canada: Profile, Labour Market Outcomes and Student Debt of the Class of 2005. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

workforce. There should be keynote speakers and mini workshops that is catered towards students from all disciplines. There should then be a follow up event provided by the Co-op and career services just to make sure students are not confused about the information received in the conference and further provide them with the resources that are available on campus.

Student Engagement/Feedback

Principle: Students should have a voice in what is offered by Co-op and Career Services.

Concern: Students are unsatisfied with the current model where little to no input from students is considered in which services are developed and improved by Co-op and Career Services.

Recommendation: Co-op and Career Services should implement a feedback model for their service where students can help pinpoint where gaps in knowledge can be filled through events, workshops, and outreach.

About 51% of McMaster students believe that there is a lack of advertising with regards to co-op opportunities, volunteer placements, and internships within the Hamilton community (McMaster Students Union 2016). According to Your City Survey, students don't believe they are given the opportunity to get involved in various aspects of the city. The biggest discrepancy is 58% in regards to a broad choice of places to work and professional job opportunities. Students feel that there is lack of involvement in McMaster services and different workshops/events provided by them.

Along with lack of proper advertisements, one of the major concerns of Co-op and Career services workshops is the use of students input and feedback. Different faculties hold various workshops regarding co-op opportunities but one of the reasons these workshops do not go as successfully is not inputting student voice in such events. For the academic Year: 2017–2018 Co-op Canadian Citizen and Co-op (International – Visa Student) pay a mandatory Supplementary fees of Fee of \$5,250, broken into three instalments of \$1,750.00.⁷ In addition, all undergraduate students pay a Career and Professional Development Fees of \$267.99. Considering that students pay much fee towards co-op, it is important that their opinions and recommendations should be taken into consideration. Below are the anticipated fees per each four-month academic term for students entering our MBA programs in September 2017.

One recommendation is for the Co-op and Career services to implement a feedback model for their services and more specifically for events and workshops. Co-op and Career Services should then apply that feedback to future action. There is a current feedback system for some of their workshops, however, this system is not placed in use properly. Inputting students voice makes them to participate more in the

⁷ "MBA Tuition and Supplemental Fees." MBA Program.

<https://mbastudent.degroot.mcmaster.ca/fees-and-scholarships/mba-tuition-and-supplemental-fees/>

service. It gives students the initiative to attend the workshops and other future events that can greatly benefit them. Voicing for a change and watching it being implemented in the future events, gives students the idea that their opinions matter. Even from early on, many schools of thought in psychology acknowledged the importance of the feeling of belonging and appreciation. One of the biggest core values as human beings are to feel needed, appreciated and to be part of a community.

On a much larger scale, it grabs the attention of more students and hence greater turnout at the events/workshops. Innovation and change is ideal to run successful events in the future, therefore, this feedback model assures improvement. After each workshop/event held by the Co-op and Career services a feedback form should be available when the event ends. In addition, a separate form should be posted online prior to the event, which is focused on what the students want to achieve from the event. Along with the form, students should be given the opportunity to provide feedback or any other raise any other issue they have in person. One way to do this is for the Co-op and Career services to hold office house or for students to book appointments. Furthermore, it is important for the services to make sure these issues (being feasible) are heard and implemented.

Principle: All students enrolled in courses that require a practicum placement should have the resources necessary to find one that suits their needs.

Concern: Students experience difficulties with finding practicum placements, and although Co-op and Career Services have the resources and expertise necessary to provide aid, they currently do not.

Recommendation: Co-op and Career Services should assist students to find practicum placements

Co-op or practicum placements are resource-intensive, with the burden being placed not only on the students but on the institute too. It has been determined that practicum placements positively affected students' academic performance, with an increase in perceived employability; and expedited employment upon graduation. preceptorships. Students participate in activities that are considered core to the curriculum and necessary for successful completion of the program, and are closely monitored by individuals working on behalf of the institution. However, securing sufficient high-quality placement sites is a perennial concern for postsecondary institutions (Barrie 2006).

Practicum placements are not hard to find; the issue is where and when to find them. Hence, a lot of students are not taking advantages of the different placement opportunities provided here at McMaster University. As mentioned before, students are paying a decent part of their fee towards Co-op and career services. However, what is the point if they are not even given the proper resources to access these opportunities.

Western University hosts annual Hack Western event where students are provided access to experts, mentors and number of workshops as well as dedicated learning tracts. These are inclusive events that are catered towards students from all disciplines. McMaster does have great resources, nevertheless, some departments are more excelled in this field than others.

One solution to this issue, is providing students with a ballot system. The placement center, in this case Co-op and Career Service should be the bridge between students and placement. So if students go there with an interest, the system should be able to direct them to a placement that fits their need. These students should then receive a ballot via their McMaster email, so that it is easy to access. The PNB department here at McMaster follows this ballot system and it has been in place for a very long time. In PNB, the ballot system allows students to pick their upper years undergraduate PNB courses that are catered towards research and co-op opportunities. Hence, a similar system should be adopted by Co-op and Career Service, that the students can greatly benefit from. This not only helps students to find placements that they are interested in, but also makes it easier for the faculty staff as most things are done electronically. Staff charged with supervising or mentoring these students need to have a strong understanding of the program and its aims to serve in that role effectively. Via this ballot system the issue of supply and demand (in other words, matching the available students with their needs) is solved because study are directly being placed in their area of interest. There is a significant administrative burden involved with getting a ballot program off the ground as well as the ongoing time commitment required for managing the program. Nevertheless, for this system to work a great deal of assistance and cooperation is required from the Co-op and Career Service.

Student Success Centre & OscarPlus

Principle: OscarPlus should be a quality resource for finding a wide variety of reliable career opportunities.

Concern: Some opportunities currently being posted on OscarPlus have been reported by students as being disreputable or having suspicious activity.

Concern: There is a lack of variety in job postings due to the limited number of employers using OscarPlus

Recommendation: The Student Success Centre should actively seek a variety of employers to give students a diversity of job options from various fields to choose from

Recommendation: The Student Success Centre should establish better relationships with the employers they partner with, and should be confident in their credibility.

Recommendation: The Student Success Centre should allow for students to provide feedback on opportunities that asked for inappropriate information, or who had other negative experiences.

OscarPlus is one of the most used University supported online job posting system. For the University to take pride in this, it should be a quality resource for students to find a wide variety of reliable career opportunities.

Some opportunities currently being posted on OscarPlus have been reported by students as being disreputable or having suspicious activity. This takes away from the credibility of the program as well as the other organizations that are posting there. It is unfair for students who use the application, and must be addressed. Additionally, there is a lack of variety in job postings due to the limited number of employers using OscarPlus.

To remedy these concerns, the Student Success Centre should establish better relationships with the employers they partner with, and should be confident in their credibility ([MORE INFO ON HOW THE SSC CHOOSES EMPLOYERS FOR OSCARPLUS??](#)). The Student Success Centre should also actively seek a variety of employers to give students a diversity of job options from various fields to choose from.

Feedback is an important part of an improvement process. The Student Success Centre should allow for students to provide feedback on opportunities that asked for inappropriate information, or who had other negative experiences. One way of doing this could be to implement a 3 strike system based on this feedback system; where warnings are given to the organizations with repetitive misconduct. This would hopefully allow for students to report suspicious activity and maintain the credibility of the job board as a whole.

Co-Curriculars

Principle: McMaster University should provide high quality co-curricular learning opportunities for students

Principle: Students should receive recognition for skills and achievements they gain both in and outside the classroom that they can show potential employers

Concern: The reduction of the MacServe program has left a gap in programming for students to gain practical experience through co-curricular experiences

Concern: The university has no formalized way of acknowledging students' soft skills that are learned in the classroom

Concern: The university has no formalized way of documenting students' extracurricular activities

Concern: PebblePad is underutilized by McMaster students

Concern: Only select employers will request or read a learning portfolio

Recommendation: McMaster Student Success Centre should better integrate PebblePad into courses, especially those that are reflection based.

Recommendation: McMaster should continue to create partnerships in the community to create service learning opportunities throughout the year

Recommendation: McMaster should promote volunteer opportunities in the community through a centralized board

Recommendation: MacPherson Institute should develop a robust badge system that can be used to document different forms of students' learning.

Learning both in and outside the traditional university classroom setting should be equally valued. Co-circulars have the ability to enhance students' education experience, with participation being positively associated with higher academic achievements.⁸ Additionally, students can gain valuable skills through these activities, that will ease their transition from university into their careers.⁹ For these reasons, McMaster should encourage student participation in these activities by promoting and, where possible, offer high-quality opportunities.

McMaster Student Success Centre used to offer the MacServe program, which offered students unique experiential learning opportunities through a trusted source. However, this program was greatly reduced in 2017. This has created a gap in experiential learning opportunities. The Student Success Centre should reflect on the successes and failures of the MacServe program and apply this knowledge to a new experiential

⁸ Hughes, J. & Mighty, J. 2010. *Taking Stock*. McGill-Queen's University Press. page 150

⁹ "Work-Integrated Learning and Post-Secondary Education: What Students Think," Abacus Data (2016)

learning program. This can take the form of partnering with local organizations to create such opportunities throughout the year while focusing on best practices including sustainability and cultural sensitivity.

McMaster should also create a centralized board promoting co-curricular activities. To be unique from similar services, McMaster should approve each opportunity based on a set of criteria that evaluates its sustainability, impact on the community, and utilization of volunteers' skills. (Additionally, there should be the potential to filter the listings to cater towards different student's interests.

In order to acknowledge students' accomplishments through co-curricular activities, MacPherson should continue to develop a digital badge system. Digital badges are a representation of a particular, skill, interest, or achievement.¹⁰ They are earned by completing a certain activity, whether online, in the classroom, or in the community.¹¹ They are particularly helpful in recognizing learning, and establishing one's identity and reputation.¹² It has been found that badges increase students' motivation when the task is challenging while also attainable.¹³ It should also heighten the earners reputation, and represent a transferable skill that will be recognized potential employers. UBC and University of Calgary have already developed robust badge systems.^{14,15} (Fees to implement this program are limited.¹⁶ The program most often used to develop badges, Open Badges, is open source and free to use.¹⁷ Development of the badges themselves requires technical skills that many employees at the university would have. In order to further encourage students to participate in co-curricular activities and to recognize their accomplishments, the university should implement the low-cost badging program.

The benefits of reflections are also well-documented. (stat). McMaster currently encourage students to reflect on PebblePad, a web based program known as a Personal Learning Space. PebblePad documents the transferable skills students gain from experiences throughout their undergraduate education. However, this service is underutilized by students (). Reasons include... . PebblePad is very expansive service, offering templates for reflections, abilities, achievements, activities. Students can also create learning portfolios, collections, activity logs, and blogs. The number of options

¹⁰ "Earning Open Badges." OpenBadges, accessed October 14, 2017, <https://openbadges.org/get-started/earning-badges/>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Landers, Richard N., and Rachel C. Callan. "Casual social games as serious games: The psychology of gamification in undergraduate education and employee training." In *Serious games and edutainment applications*, pp. 399–423. Springer London, 2011.

¹⁴ "Open Badges UBC," The University of British Columbia, accessed October 14, 2017

¹⁵ "UCalgary Badges," University of Calgary, accessed October 14, 2017

¹⁶ Consultation with the MacPherson Institute.

¹⁷ "Open Badges Services and Software," OpenBadgesm accessed October 14, 2017, <https://openbadges.org/about/participating-services/#open-source>

and the ability to customize them provides enough variety to meet students' unique needs. Therefore, the problem lies in the lack of promotion and incentive to use PebblePad. It is important that PebblePad is adequately used to not only justify the high cost of the subscription but to ensure students are gaining the most from every learning experience. The Student Success Centre should work with professors to integrate PebblePad into their classes. Many classes that already evaluate students on reflections would be able to easily adopt the program. By first working with classes, students would gain exposure and experience with the program and be more likely to use PebblePad for reflections outside the classroom. To further incentive students to use the program, McMaster could offer badges to students who write a certain number of reflections. Badges could also be awarded to students that adequately describe certain skills that they have gained. This would be more time intensive, since someone would have to ensure that students meet the criteria for the badge. However, this would be a valuable incentive that could increase PebblePad's usage.

Entrepreneurship

Principle: All students regardless of program of study should have access to courses and experiences that develop entrepreneurial skills.

Principle: Entrepreneurial learning opportunities should be experiential and involve forming connections with the Hamilton community.

Principle: All willing and qualified students should have access to funding support for the purpose of exploring entrepreneurship opportunities in the City of Hamilton.

Concern: There are no general or interdisciplinary entrepreneurial courses.

Concern: Opportunities given by Forge@ Mac are only available to a handful of students and not well advertised

Concern: Government funding to entrepreneurship is extremely limited

Concern: McMaster's intellectual property policy is harmful to students

Recommendation: McMaster University should create a Level I or II general experiential course focusing on building entrepreneurial skills.

Recommendation: McMaster should promote more Forge@Mac opportunities to increase the number of applicants.

Recommendation: (someone?) should increase funding to Forge@Mac and other entrepreneurial opportunities to make it available to more students.

Recommendation: The City of Hamilton and McMaster should create a joint fund that student entrepreneurs can access when starting a business.

Recommendation: McMaster should remodel its intellectual property policy emphasizing transparency and students' rights.

Students with some form of entrepreneurial experience gain many valuable skills which allow them to be more successful in the workforce¹⁸. Attention recently given to Waterloo's velocity program highlights how Waterloo's focus on entrepreneurship

¹⁸ Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. "Student Employment Policy Paper" (2016).

attracts employers and makes their students more employable¹⁹.

McMaster does not currently offer undergraduate courses related to entrepreneurship, other than those restricted to commerce²⁰ or engineering students²¹. Creating or working for a startup while enrolled as a full-time student is difficult to fund and balance with other academic commitments, and therefore students should have the opportunity to learn skills related to entrepreneurship in other ways²². An entrepreneurship course could focus on skills necessary to work in a startup or development environment, which are transferrable to any and all (technical and social) future entrepreneurship endeavours²³. Skills gained from a specific entrepreneurial experience may not be as widely applicable²⁴, and therefore McMaster should provide both experiential and classroom learning opportunities.

Currently, for a McMaster student to develop a business around an idea or product they have developed, they need to receive permission from all possible stakeholders within a brief window of time²⁵. If the idea or product was developed as part of a public-private partnership (PPP), any institutions involved can make a claim for the intellectual property, McMaster having priority²⁶. McMaster should remodel this system in a way which echoes Waterloo's policy, where a student who wishes to use University resources as part of their venture may sign a clear contract detailing each party's rights and responsibilities, including that the University covers costs involved with patenting, and guarantees the student 75% of profits²⁷. This way, students are supported in their business ventures, and have a written agreement that defines their ownership of their intellectual property.

The Forge is a Hamilton-based organization which works to encourage entrepreneurship by providing workspace, training, mentorship, and resources to aspiring entrepreneurs²⁸. The Forge@Mac is an arm of the Forge specifically for McMaster students, which gives out \$105,000 in grants to winners of their yearly

¹⁹ Gellman, Lindsay. "Why Silicon Valley Recruiters Are Flocking to Ontario." *The Wall Street Journal*. May 04, 2016. Accessed October 30, 2017. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-silicon-valley-recruiters-are-flocking-to-ontario-1462385408>.

²⁰ "COMMERCE 4SE3 – Entrepreneurship," McMaster University, http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=24&coid=140392

²¹ "Engineering Management Program – Entrepreneurship," McMaster University, <https://www.eng.mcmaster.ca/engineering-management-program#Entrepreneurship>

²² Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. "Student Employment Policy Paper" (2016).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "The Forge@Mac," <https://theforge.mcmaster.ca/the-forgemac/>

competitions²⁹. In their winter Student Startup Competition, around ten students are awarded \$5,000 to \$20,000, totalling \$100,000³⁰. The number of students receiving funding is a tiny fraction of McMaster's population, meaning that the majority of students do not have access to these opportunities. However, not many students even apply. In 2016, only slightly over fifty student-lead startups applied³¹. Again, in contrast to McMaster's student population this number is shockingly low. McMaster should advertise the Forge@Mac so that more students interested in entrepreneurship are connected with the services McMaster supplies. However, existing opportunity could not possibly stretch to reach enough students. The Forge is funded by the Ontario Government, and the limit to their funding means they cannot give sufficient grants to the amount of students who are qualified. In 2016, they lowered their grant money from \$25,000 to \$20,000 per project because the applicant pool was so strong³². Clearly McMaster students are enthusiastic and capable entrepreneurs, and McMaster should support them by increasing funding to the Forge@Mac.

Students services can provide a network for students to be given jobs at various startup companies for them to get a first-hand experience. This will benefit both the company and the student as it is very difficult for startup companies to find initial employees and for students to find jobs, therefore it produces a mutualistic relationship between the two parties. Furthermore, the university itself can advocate more for entrepreneurship and the skills learned from it as many students do not understand what entrepreneurship is. Giving students opportunities in learning what entrepreneurship may attract and motivate students to build their own companies. To cultivate a startup/entrepreneurial culture in Hamilton is to establish that an entrepreneurial mindset will lead to success and get students more involved in entrepreneurial activities. More programs and speakers from the industry should be coming to McMaster to speak to students about entrepreneurship and creating something oneself. Through programs and speakers, students will obtain a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship which will mean that students will be more motivated to create an ecosystem of entrepreneurship and, in turn, motivate more students to pursue entrepreneurship.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Student Startup Competition (Winter)," <https://theforge.mcmaster.ca/the-forgemac/>

³¹ "Spectrum Student Startup," <https://theforge.mcmaster.ca/2016/04/01/spectrum-student-startup-2016-results/>

³² Ibid.

Experiential Learning Courses

Principle: There should be a better integration of experiential learning, self-directed learning, and interdisciplinarity in undergraduate programs

Principle: All students should have the opportunity to take a Experiential Learning class regardless of program

Principle: All students should be able to easily seek out experiential learning opportunities

Concern: Some experiential learning opportunities are restricted to specific programs

Concern: Some programs lack experiential learning opportunities

Concern: Experiential learning classes are not explicitly labelled as such to students

Concern: Experiential learning classes can be costly for students

Recommendation: Programs / facilities should invest in creating more experiential learning courses that will best fit their students' needs

Recommendation: The Arts & Science and Integrated Science Programs should expand the ARTSCI/ISCI 3IE1/2/3 Interdisciplinary Experience courses to all facilities

Recommendation: The Office of Registrar should create a section on the course calendar highlighting interdisciplinary courses

Recommendation: The Office of Registrar should reduced the cost of experiential education courses

In Patrick Deane's letter "Forward with Integrity" he states, "Experiential learning will thus be key both to the future quality and to the sustainability of our programs."³³ Furthermore, he encourages all units of the university to consider integrating more experiential, self-directed, and interdisciplinary learning.³⁴ In order to follow his vision, facilities should prioritize these pedagogically sound methods of teaching.

Both the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development and the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel have recommended that every student have at least one EE/WIL opportunity in their post-secondary experience (PSE).^{35,36} Students who have engaged with some form of EE during their PSE generally rate it as highly satisfactory, as having enhanced their PSE experience, made them more equipped for

³³ Patrick Deane, "Forward With Integrity," McMaster University, Sept. 21 2011, <https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/forwardwithintegrity2.pdf> p.7

³⁴ Ibid., 14

³⁵ "Interdisciplinary Experiences (3IE1/2/3)," *Arts & Science Program*, n.d., <https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/courses-year/3ie1-2-3/>

³⁶ "Building the Workforce of Tomorrow," The Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel (2016)

the job force.^{37,38} Around half of students believe there should be more opportunities for WIL.^{39,40} All other factors considered, most students would choose a program with a WIL component over one without.⁴¹ Both provincially and federally, around half of students participate in some form of WIL, numbers which drop to around 1/3 in the OPSSS survey.^{42,43} However, only 25% of respondents at McMaster indicated that they participated in some form of WIL and 43% said their program did not offer any WIL opportunities.⁴⁴ Clearly McMaster is not providing its students with sufficient opportunities.

Terms like WIL and EE do not have universal definitions, and are often used to mean different things by different institutions.^{45,46} Until a common definition is reached, McMaster should clearly define key terms such as work-integrated learning and experiential education, and identify courses with WIL, EE, and interdisciplinary elements to ensure maximum clarity for students.

The only faculties with courses currently marked as “experiential education” or “experiential learning” are Arts & Science, Social Sciences, and Science. These courses are all faculty exclusive. As every student should have access to an EE course, the above faculties should make their EE courses available to everyone where possible. For instance, Arts & Science and Integrated Science offer one to three credit courses Interdisciplinary Experiences on a range of topics. These experiences can easily be offered to students in other programs. In addition, faculties which do not currently provide EE courses should invest in creating new ones which are tailored to the requirements of their students. Some key elements of EE courses are relevancy to

³⁷ Gurrisi, Marc. Quality: Results from the 2015 Ontario Post–Secondary Student Survey. Research Report. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2017

³⁸ Peggy Sattler and Julie Peters, “Work–Integrated Learning in Ontario’s Postsecondary Sector: The Experience of Ontario Graduates,” Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (Toronto, 2013).

³⁹ “Work–Integrated Learning and Post–Secondary Education: What Students Think,” Abacus Data (2016)

⁴⁰ Gurrisi, Marc. Quality: Results from the 2015 Ontario Post–Secondary Student Survey. Research Report. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2017

⁴¹ “Work–Integrated Learning and Post–Secondary Education: What Students Think,” Abacus Data (2016)

⁴² Peggy Sattler and Julie Peters, “Work–Integrated Learning in Ontario’s Postsecondary Sector: The Experience of Ontario Graduates,” Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (Toronto, 2013).

⁴³ “Taking the Pulse of Work–Integrated Learning in Canada,” Business / Higher Education Roundtable (2016).

⁴⁴ Gurrisi, Marc. Quality: Results from the 2015 Ontario Post–Secondary Student Survey. Research Report. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2017

⁴⁵ “Taking the Pulse of Work–Integrated Learning in Canada,” Business / Higher Education Roundtable (2016).

⁴⁶ Peggy Sattler and Julie Peters, “Work–Integrated Learning in Ontario’s Postsecondary Sector: The Experience of Ontario Graduates,” Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (Toronto, 2013).

employment fields, capstone or independent projects, opportunities to build relationships with those currently working in the field, self-reflection, and interdisciplinary attributes, such as working with groups outside one's faculty or program.^{47,48,49}

The two largest barriers to EE and WIL participation for students are cost and time,^{50,51} so EE courses / opportunities should be financially viable (for instance, SOCSCI 2ELO is tuition-free) and not add time to your degree like a co-op program might.

Municipal Engagement

Student Access to Engagement

Principle: Students who want to engage with their community in a meaningful respectful way should have the access and capacity to do so.

Principle: Students should be able to gain meaningful summer or part-time employment relating to their field of study

Concern: The City of Hamilton has a limited number of summer jobs relating to students' area of study

Concern: The City of Hamilton does not promote part time job opportunities

Concern: Many partnerships may only be with one faculty on specific topics

Recommendation: The City of Hamilton should seek out and expand the number of jobs relating to students' specific area of study to create a more diverse pool of options

Recommendation: The City of Hamilton should create part-time job opportunities throughout the year

Recommendation: Hamilton Health Sciences should expand their partnership with McMaster to other departments, including engineering

Recommendation: McMaster should create diverse and creative partnerships with organizations in order to expand the amount of opportunities for students in all fields of study.

"McMaster has demonstrated throughout its history that outstanding academic work can be an extraordinary force for the good of human beings, society, and nature; so our task in the future must be to consolidate and deepen that contribution... We need

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "MAESD's Guiding Principles for Experiential Learning," Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development

⁴⁹ "Building the Workforce of Tomorrow," The Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel (2016)

⁵⁰ "Taking the Pulse of Work-Integrated Learning in Canada," Business / Higher Education Roundtable (2016).

⁵¹ "Work-Integrated Learning and Post-Secondary Education: What Students Think," Abacus Data (2016)

to integrate it [community engagement] fully and meaningfully into the work of the academy"⁵²

The concept of increasing and enabling "Student Community Engagement" to be integrated into the academic institutions at McMaster is a key part of the Forward with Integrity Letter authored by Patrick Deane; and therefore part of the strategic direction of the University. In this way, McMaster has a responsibility to ensure that students who want to engage with their community in a meaningful respectful way, have the access and capacity to do so. One of such ways to increase student engagement with the community is participation in meaningful employment opportunities in Hamilton that are relevant to their field of study. This is a reciprocal approach to engagement as students and the community both gain from the interaction: Students receive experience and training, and local communities are able to utilize University trained young workers. By allowing students to meaningfully contribute to their communities, McMaster will be facilitating growth in both parties, and establishing significant relationships for sustainable development.

The City of Hamilton has a limited number of summer jobs relating to student's' area of study. On their website where students may apply, they state: "The opportunities in this category [opportunities specific to a student's area of study] are very limited. These positions are subject to change and are dependent upon budget availability."⁵³

This illustrates the lack of availability and resources allocated by the City to supporting students in finding opportunities relevant to their field of study. This reduces the amount of students who leave McMaster with work experience to help them find employment after University. Those who participate in apprenticeships, for example, tend to have improved employment prospects, higher income, increased job security, and further opportunities for training and development.⁵⁴ In general participation of Work Integrated Learning, many students have expressed that participation in such programs helped them mature as a person, and improved their ability to get along with people in work situations.⁵⁵

⁵² Deane, Patrick. 2011. *Forward With Integrity: A Letter To The McMaster Community*. Ebook. Hamilton: McMaster University.

⁵³ "Specific To Area Of Study And Administrative Jobs". 2016. *Hamilton.Ca*.

<https://www.hamilton.ca/jobs-city/student-youth-opportunities/specific-area-study-and-administrative-jobs>.

⁵⁴ Munro, Daniel, Cameron MacLaine, and James Stuckey. 2014. "The State Of Skills And PSE In Canada.". The Conference Board of Canada.

⁵⁵ Sattler, Peggy, and Julie Peters. 2013. "Work-Integrated Learning In Ontario'S Postsecondary Sector: The Experience Of Ontario Graduates". Toronto: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/WIL_Experience_ON_Graduates_ENG.pdf.

Another important concern to be addressed is that for the few opportunities the City of Hamilton offers, they are not promoted well if at all. This is relevant not only for summer students but most part time, and other job opportunities they offer. Without sufficient promotion, this adds another barrier to effective student engagement as many are not even aware of opportunities that are available. The only current method of promotion seems to be on the city website, which does not provide specific employment titles but rather random job clusters. There is little ability in this current method of promotion for students to find an opportunity that is meaningful and relevant.

Of the partnerships that are created by the city to students, they generally benefit only one particular subset. Many partnerships may only be with one faculty on specific topics. For example, the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster uses community partnerships in their HTHSCI 4D09 or 4D12 Thesis in Engaging the City experiential learning course. This course connects student capabilities with community needs, and provides valuable experience to students while assisting community growth. Another example is how Hamilton Health Sciences works closely with the Faculty of Nursing. These are very good ways to promote student engagement in their community, but only affect students in those faculties. Other students therefore have fewer opportunities simply due to their field of study.

To address these issues, action must be taken both on the part of the City of Hamilton, and McMaster University, to ensure that all students have equitable access to municipal engagement. First, the City of Hamilton should seek out and expand the number of jobs relating to students' specific area of study. This will hopefully address the deficit of opportunities for specific students in faculties that aren't currently addressed by the City. For this to be successful, the expansion of opportunities should contain a diverse pool of employment options. To accomplish this, student feedback on what opportunities are missing in their field of study could assist in the development of niche options, or at least to inform the City of where to explore future partnerships.

The City of Hamilton should also create part-time job opportunities throughout the year as current time constraints and summer opportunities that end in the fall are not accessible to many students. For some students who rent their Hamilton dwellings, summer opportunities are missed as they are required to be in their permanent addresses for the summer months. Without adequate options when they return to Hamilton for the school term, students are unable to find useful opportunities for professional growth. By providing more part-time opportunities throughout the year, this barrier will be reduced, and students will be able to find placement and engage in the community.

Partnerships between community members and McMaster University should continue to grow, and expand. Additionally, McMaster should be actively seeking other partnerships and ways to improve relationships. Hamilton Health Sciences in particular

should further incorporate McMaster faculties into their partnership with the University. The more departments that are able to be a part of such partnerships, the more accessible these types of programs become to all students at McMaster.

With more and more students professing the importance of related work experience, income and relevant work experience are obviously a heightening priority for students in Ontario. For proof of this, the 2016 ABACUS survey that found a staggering 89% of current students and recent grads support more work integrated learning in programs.⁵⁶ With this awareness, McMaster should better facilitate connecting students to opportunities in effective sustainable ways. The City should benefit from this increased demand for opportunity by creating more openings to take advantage of these passionate, educated individuals.

Training for Engagement

Principle: Students should be adequately prepared to represent McMaster University when working with community members

Principle: Students should be trained appropriately in their work placements.

Concern: The community has expressed concerns that students can be disrespectful and current efforts to create partnerships are not sufficient in effectively connecting students to community needs.

Concern: Current job programs in Hamilton do not sufficiently train students.

Recommendation: The Office of Community Engagement should create a training module open to all students on proper community engagement

Recommendation: The Office of Community Engagement should expand the number of course offerings to students

Recommendation: McMaster should be creating partnerships with various community organizations, example: Citylab.

Recommendation: City should expand its student job program to provide more professional training for those participating in it.

Forward With Integrity committed that community engagement is a long held valued part of McMaster University culture, however, there is significant concern from students and community members that current efforts to create partnerships are not sufficient in effectively connecting these two parties. Several community members have complained about this issue and some have gone even so far to say they do not want students volunteering with them until they receive training.⁵⁷ The inception of the Office of Community Engagement was a good first step in trying to establish a facilitator for organizing a network to connect students and community members, however, the office has not been able to sufficiently address the lack of training given to students who engage in research and activities in the community.

⁵⁶ (CITE ABACUS DATA p. 13)

⁵⁷ Consultation with the Office of Community Engagement.

They have taken the first step and designed handbooks and training for those who will be interacting with the community, including instructors and student clubs. The in-person training is not yet well-delivered. Considering staffing constraints, it may be difficult to meet the demand of individuals who would benefit from this training. The Office of Community Engagement should thus adapt their current training into an online interactive module that is available to all students and instructors at McMaster. After they complete this module, individuals should receive a certificate that they can show either their instructor or community members as verification.

For students who would like to deepen their understanding of community engagement best practices, they should be able to take classes on the subject. Currently, the Office of Community Engagement offers a foundational course on the subject (CMTYENGA 2A03) through the Arts & Science program. This course offers one core per term with a class size of 40 students. Students from any program are able to enroll, demonstrating its accessibility. To further increase its accessibility, more cores should be offered in order to fit into more students' schedules and to provide more students with this foundational knowledge. Additionally, for those who are keen on furthering their knowledge, they should be able to further explore the subject through upper level courses. The Office of Community Engagement should consider creating an upper level course where students will be able to apply their foundational knowledge. This course should be provide students with a meaningful and enriching experience of working with the local community on a project the community deems a priority. This will provide an experiential learning opportunity to students who may otherwise not be able to access such classes.

Provincial Legislation

Closing Loopholes in the Employment Standards Act (ESA)

Principle: Student pursuing internships should have equal rights to those of other individuals

Concern: The Employment Standards Act (ESA) does not apply to individuals interning with a program under their post-secondary institution due to the internship's purported practical training to further education.

Recommendation: The exception regarding college and university programs should be lifted from the ESA subsection on internships

In the 2015 Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey, published by the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), about 9,200 undergraduate students were surveyed. Findings showed that two-thirds of the participants had never participated in WIL opportunities during their post-secondary education.⁵⁸ Of those individuals who had, 84% were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience, and 88% also reported that such an opportunity improved or significantly improved the overall quality of their education. It has also been reported elsewhere that students in co-op programs had a 92% employment rate six months following graduation, as compared to 87% for those who did not.⁵⁹ Even more importantly, 93% of co-op students had full-time employment, while merely 79% of students without co-op experience worked full-time. Thus, these results point to the merit of WIL opportunities such as co-op programs and internships in improving the practical education that students receive, as well as potentially leading to better long-term job opportunities following graduation.

These long-term benefits, however, can be overshadowed by the disadvantages of a rising number of unpaid internships, which can often exploit the capabilities of students rather than providing them with meaningful experiences to supplement their education. One of the greatest costs of an unpaid internship, in particular, is the opportunity cost of forgoing paid work elsewhere.⁶⁰ Such costs can compound over time to thousands of dollars in lost wages. In fact, between September to December in 2015, the provincial government recovered almost \$140,000 in wages for unpaid interns following a blitz at workplaces across Ontario.⁶¹ Of the 77 workplaces that had interns, almost 25% did not meet the requirements as laid out in the Employment Standards Act (ESA).

⁵⁸ Gurrisi, Marc. Quality: Results from the 2015 Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey. Research Report. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2017

⁵⁹ Postsecondary Education Partners' Gateway, "University Employment Outcomes, Graduation and Student Loan Default Rates," Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, last modified March 11, 2014, <http://www.iaccess.gov.on.ca/OSAPRatesWeb/en/index.html>.

⁶⁰ Attfield, James, and Isabelle Couture. "An investigation into the status and implications of unpaid internships in Ontario." (2014).

⁶¹ Ontario recovers nearly \$140,000 in wages for unpaid interns:
<https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/ontario-recovers-nearly-140000-in-wages-for-unpaid-interns/article29797641/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&>

Another cost of unpaid internships is the monetary costs that students must often pay for transportation to the internship location, which also adds up over time. Furthermore, interns have historically often been required to work as much and as hard as regular employees, but without the added benefit of a regular paycheque. This has great implications for their mental health, with one report findings showing that many interns were found to face additional psychological stress as a result of their uncertain financial situation and the unremunerated costs of daily expenses.⁶² In particular to students from the lower income bracket, they may additionally be working a paid job in order to compensate for the lack of money received at an internship. This can further add burden to one's health due to the stress of balancing all commitments with academic needs simultaneously.

The Employment Standards Act provides many employees with rights to minimum wage, leaves of absence, vacation pay, and benefit plans. This has the potential to greatly alleviate the negative impacts that students potentially face at internships. There are several exclusion criteria listed, however, including "a secondary school student who performs work under a work experience program authorized by the school board that operates the school in which the student is enrolled" or those individuals who are training for listed professions, like law. Individuals are also not considered an employee, and thereby excluded from the protection of the Act, if they meet all of the following six conditions:

1. The training is similar to that which is given in a vocational school.
2. The training is for the benefit of the individual.
3. The person providing the training derives little, if any, benefit from the activity of the individual while he or she is being trained.
4. The individual does not displace employees of the person providing the training.
5. The individual is not accorded a right to become an employee of the person providing the training.
6. The individual is advised that he or she will receive no remuneration for the time that he or she spends in training.⁶³

These exemptions of students from the ESA not only unfairly and unreasonably expose post-secondary students to exploitation by employees, they do so through the broad language used, as visible from the six conditions listed above. There is potential for misinterpretation of the conditions listed above in order to consider an intern as exempted, for instance. Other provinces like British Columbia and Quebec also include

⁶² Attfield, James, and Isabelle Couture. "An investigation into the status and implications of unpaid internships in Ontario." (2014).

⁶³ Employment Standards Act, 2000. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/00e41#BK5>

similar provisions for unpaid or underpaid internships, but the legal language used is much more specific than the one laid out here.

It is noteworthy that the government has made progress through other examples such as Bill-18, Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy, which was established in 2014. It offers those students participating in experiential learning opportunities greater protection under the Occupational Health and Safety Act by considering those in unpaid internships through a college or university program as “workers.”⁶⁴ This does not, however, get rid of the potential for exploitation that students continue to face without amendments to the ESA.

In February 2015, the Minister of Labour began the independent Changing Workplaces Review, which focussed on reviewing and developing recommendations for the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (LRA) and the Employment Standards Act, 2000 (ESA). Of the 173 recommendations put forth, it was recommended that the clause excluding interns and trainees from being protected by the ESA to be removed “for various reasons including the abuse that is apparent by some employers.” As such, McMaster should advocate for amendments to the ESA that lead to much more specific language. This would thereby prevent employers from drawing broad conclusions that could allow them to exclude interns who rightfully deserve to be treated as employees.

Even aside from these alterations to other sections of the ESA, McMaster should advocate for the complete removal of this exemption from Section 3(5), which excludes post-secondary students from attaining employee status. Students in unpaid positions such as internships regularly perform the same tasks as regular, paid employees, so they should be entitled to fair working hours and reasonable pay. This will greatly allow students to pursue WIL opportunities without the fear of additional costs or unfair work environments acting as barriers.

Mitigating unpaid student labour in experiential courses

Principle: Students should not have to pay to provide services otherwise requiring employees

Concern: Students taking experiential courses, offering unsalaried work to employers, still pay tuition for such courses

Recommendation: Tuition for such courses should be reduced; standards for course costs should be established.

Patrick Deane’s Forward with Integrity letter (2011), prompting the expansion of work integrated learning (WIL), has been met with new opportunities for McMaster University students to engage in experiential courses supplementing their in-class learning. Despite this expansion, opportunities remain limited for many students on the basis of financial concerns. Considering Business/Higer Education Roundtable’s summary report, concluding that the most commonly cited reasons among students not

⁶⁴ http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=3010

pursuing WIL opportunities to be logistical or financial, McMaster University has reason to revise the current guidelines informing tuition costs for experiential courses.

Currently, many experiential courses require a time commitment that exceeds the workload of a regular course. Additionally, there are often hidden costs associated with such experiences, including uniforms and transportation. The tuition of these courses, however, has not been adjusted to reflect these extra costs, resulting in extra costs comparing to conventional classroom learning. These costs become especially concerning when considering the many experiential courses requiring students to perform work under companies or organizations for school credit, thus receiving no compensation.

With important steps in the process to participating in WIL acting as financial barriers, McMaster University should consider reducing the cost of these courses. These courses also incur relatively little costs, noting that much of the WIL takes place externally. Especially in situations where students are required to solidify their own WIL partnership, faculty and other administrative costs are significantly reduced. The pricing structure of these courses should therefore be modified accordingly, with the best interests of these working students in mind.

Student Employment Funding

Ontario Public Services

Principle: Government services (as Ontario Public Services) should assist with employment of a wide range of skills and abilities, as reflective of the populations they represent

Concern: As a primary provider of public service jobs, Ontario Public Services is limited in opportunities, thereby failing to meet the needs of many of its applicants

Recommendation: Ontario Public Services should focus on forming more, diversified partnerships to employ greater numbers of people

The Ontario Public Service (OPS) cites itself as being “one of the largest employers in the province, employing more than 60,000 people”.⁶⁵ This claim runs in stark contrast to the number and scope of opportunities offered on their website. Currently, the service presents as a missed opportunity, largely due to the lack of postings, rendering more effective aspects of their process like their email Job Alert system useless.

Students and others looking to pursue jobs in public service are well-informed in their decisions, noting the all the merits accompanying such professions. Beyond enabling individuals to enact meaningful change in Canada, the public sector also allows for a good quality of life, faring better for employment security factors and benefits compared to private sector jobs.⁶⁶ Analyses in 2013 revealed that government workers were less likely to lose their jobs, with a 0.7% chance compared to 3.6% in the private sector, and that a significant proportion of these individuals were covered by a registered pension plan. However, with unclear entry and no centralized resources for seeking out new jobs, individuals face receive less information and guidance in securing these careers.

The disadvantages of current practice in updating and providing opportunities in public service may also extend beyond the individual. More generally, being necessary to the operations of government services, upkeep of the public service industry matters and failures in doing so may present several consequences "... [especially] in the globalization system ... one of the most important and enduring competitive advantages that a country can have today is a lean, effective, honest civil service".⁶⁷ Also considering that public service more large-scale and multi-leveled than any Canadian private sector organization, there needs to be greater effort, exposure, and organization when recruiting for such positions.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ <https://www.gojobs.gov.on.ca/Pages/GreatCareers.aspx>

⁶⁶ Palacios, Milagros, and Jason Clemens. "Comparing public and private sector compensation in Canada." (2013).

⁶⁷ Quote – Thomas Friedman

⁶⁸ <http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/index.asp?lang=eng&page=clerk-greffier&sub=archives&doc=20090506-eng.htm>

The government has noticed these needs and attempted to launch Public Service Renewal projects, through their Blueprint 2020, that have worked towards onboarding students into the profession.⁶⁹ However, entry into the field, as mediated by services like the Ontario Public Service job board, has not significantly been helped. In the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) next-generation public service article, no amendments were made to account for the lack of postings on job boards.

As a recommendation, Public Service Ontario should try to consolidate efforts with other similar boards for a more active, updated, and centralized system. Additionally, this service should continue to forge partnerships with various divisions of public service jobs to bring more opportunities to searching candidates. Particularly, there should be more student and entry-level positions available, as this makes up the majority of individuals using these sites.

The Federal Work Experience Program (FSWEP) and The Canadian Summer Jobs Program

Principle: Students, taking the time to apply for jobs, should be regularly updated on the status of their application

Principle: Students receiving financial aid should be funded in a timely manner

Concern: The Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) is both unorganized and uncommunicative in their efforts of connecting students to jobs

Concern: Canada Summer Jobs program opportunities are being unrealized due to delayed governmental grants

Recommendation: The Ongoing Student Recruitment Inventory should be opted out in exchange for a more timely application process; despite the high volume of applicants in this portal, random applicant selection should cease to exist, noting that it is largely unfair for its lack of consideration for all eligible students

Recommendation: Rules should be imposed on the government to move up funding deadlines

The youth unemployment rate, as reported by Statistics Canada, has been steadily decreasing since the start of the year and reached 10.3% in September, a 1.2 percentage-point decrease.⁷⁰ This is the lowest rate since comparable data on unemployment rate became accessible in 1976, suggesting a promising time for students to access employment opportunities as they get out into the work force.

However, the problem still remains that many students do not end up finding positions in the field that they have completed their degree in or are currently studying. A Statistics Canada report suggests a substantial decline in the number of youth

⁶⁹ https://www.capam.org/knowledge/articles/2017/next_generation_public_service.html

⁷⁰ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/171006/dq171006a-eng.htm>

employed in full-time permanent jobs over the last 40 years.⁷¹ The report states, “From 1976 to 1978, the full-time employment rate—the percentage of the population with a full-time job—averaged 76% for men aged 17 to 24 and 58% for women in the same age group who were not in school full time. By the mid-2010s, that is from the beginning of 2014 to the third quarter of 2016, the corresponding percentages were 59% for men and 49% for women.” This is a substantial decrease in a time when rising postsecondary costs make it necessary for many students to pursue job opportunities during and after their postsecondary education period.

This was also corroborated by the 2015 Ontario Postsecondary Student Survey, which showed that of the 38% of individuals who reportedly worked in Fall 2015 while studying, a mere 32% of them had work positions unrelated to their field of study.⁷² The Government of Canada has been working towards improving the job availability for students through programs such as the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) and the Canada Summer Jobs program, which is part of the Canadian government’s Youth Employment Strategy initiative aimed towards helping young people overcome barriers to employment and gain the skills and experiences needed to successfully move into the labour market after graduation. These opportunities, while a good way of providing students with the opportunity to find positions potentially related to their fields of study, are not without their shortcomings.

The Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) is a year-round program that offers full-time students work opportunities in the federal public service.⁷³ This program utilizes an Ongoing Student Recruitment Inventory, through which students can submit an application process at any point and wait until they have been selected for a job opportunity. However, there are nuances to the student selection process. As the website states, “When there are job openings, a search will be conducted in the student inventory. If your application matches the manager’s search criteria, you may be contacted* for a test and/or interview.”⁷⁴ The asterisk refers to the fact that in favour of a fair selection process, employers may use a random selection of applications who meet the criteria for their job posting. This reduces consideration of a student’s eligibility and competence for that particular job to merely meeting all the requirements for the position, which presents a disadvantage to those students who may be more qualified over a candidate that was randomly selected.

Additionally, anecdotal evidence suggests that the FSWEP application itself is considered to be lengthy and complicated. For those students who do submit applications, they are often unsure as to the status of their application and are left

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Gurrisi, Marc. Quality: Results from the 2015 Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey. Research Report. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2017.

⁷³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/jobs/services/recruitment/students/federal-student-work-program.html>

⁷⁴ <https://emploisfp-psjobs.cfp-psc.gc.ca/srs-sre/page01.htm?poster=1&lang=en>

wondering whether they will be receiving any offers for interviews at any point soon. The fact that the application process might take students so long to complete only to be left uncertain about even receiving an interview can be a stressful experience. For this purpose, the FSWEP is in great need of streamlining the process in a manner that allows students to submit their application in a more time-efficient manner and be updated on the status of their application periodically.

There are several issues with the Canada Summer Jobs program as well. For students, perhaps the greatest shortcoming is the fact that this program only applies to full-time students. This presents a problem in particular for those students who are part-time students simply because they cannot afford full-time studies. These are the students perhaps most in need of financial support through opportunities such as Canada Summer Jobs, so to be excluded from the application process is a gap that must be addressed. Additionally, the Canada Summer Jobs program is required to review all applications for funding received from employers and inform them of the status of their application before students can be hired and begin employment. This also raises a problem because Service Canada normally informs employers of the approval or rejection of their application in April.⁷⁵ For university students, this may lead to lost opportunities as many students need to confirm their summer positions much earlier in the year. By waiting until April for a work position that may end up not getting funding approval, students are jeopardizing their summer job opportunities. If rejected, students may not have any other opportunities available for them by that point.

Both of these programs have merits, but they also have their shortcomings. McMaster needs to advocate for its students to the government in order to bring improvements to both of these programs. For FSWEP, McMaster can better provide support to students through the application process while pushing the government to streamline the process. Similarly for Canada Summer Jobs, McMaster can work with local MPs to ensure that the approval process for employers is completed early in order to give students ample time to submit applications themselves.

McMaster's Work-Study Program

Principle: Students with comparable experience should have equal opportunity to work placements

Concern: Students whose families do not receive OSAP funding are more limited in job opportunities than other individuals, despite their own needs to work

Recommendation: The existing Work Study eligibility criteria should be revisited to include non-OSAP students with financial need as well.

⁷⁵ <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/youth-summer-job.html>

The benefits of the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) cannot be overlooked for those receiving financial aid for tuition. However, OSAP eligibility – due to issues of equity – does not consider individual debt, disqualifying students despite similar needs of funding. The provincial government's Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development has echoed these concerns, articulating that “students who believe that their circumstances are not reflected in the standard assessment may request a review of their OSAP file by contacting their financial aid office and completing a review form”.⁷⁶ However, appeals are only considered in extenuating circumstances, leaving many students unassisted.

At McMaster, this issue is further exacerbated through such systems as the Work-Study program, which exists to provide OSAP-funded individuals with work opportunities through the university. Work-Study, which may subsidize part of the salary paid by partner employees, incentivizes the hiring of OSAP individuals over non-OSAP individuals. Again, while the intention in doing so is to promote equity, OSAP’s inability to fund families comprehensively runs the risk of working against non-OSAP students’ financial stability as well as professional development. Acknowledging the limitations placed on non-OSAP students, the university should adjust for the inequality extending a proportion of predetermined listings to these individuals as well.

⁷⁶<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/parent-income-high-osap-finances-university-waterloo-1.4249481> Quoted – The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development spokesperson Tanya Blazina