



Association for
Co-operative Education
and Work-Integrated
Learning

BC/Yukon

ACE-WIL Practitioners: Working from Home and Recovery Planning

Survey July 2021

11 Questions; 33 Responses

Analysis and Report Completed by Jennifer Sator

The ACE-WIL Research Committee is seeking to better understand what WIL Practitioners learned in the last fifteen months of working from home with the aim to share anonymized learnings and best practices.

Q1. What is your job title?

33 Responses

23 Co-op/ Project/ Employment Coordinators
3 Executive/ Associate Directors
2 Advisors
2 Faculty/Program Assistants
1 Media Designer
1 Instructor

Section A: Reflection

Q2. What has been rewarding during the past 15 months working from home?

33 Responses divided into 3 themes:

Flexibility, Time, Work-life Balance, and Commuting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 responses: "Flexibility, and the best work life balance I have ever had in my life. I eat better, exercise more, and am more mentally clear and happy than ever. We were able to sell our second car and save a ton of money by going remote. No parking fees. Low/no cost wardrobe."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 responses: "More ownership of my time, being able to schedule 'heads-down' time when I know I'm more likely to be productive, take breaks when I need them, and not having to be immediately available to everyone all the time for anything."
Engagement with Colleagues and Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 responses: "Far fewer unnecessary interruption from chatty co-workers - My productivity has nearly doubled because I can concentrate on my work without interruption. My colleagues are available by Teams chat, and I can see from their status whether they are available or not, so I do not interrupt them either."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 responses: "It was rewarding to be able to support students and accomplish a very high amount of workload and adaptation and mental load in the past 15 months. Creating interactive workshops, reaching students who are around the world, finding ways to be creative with our services and connecting with schools/other departments as they explore ways to support their students. I feel like we've had more opportunity to do engage across departments and deliver services. I am very proud of level of commitment to supporting students."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 responses: "Easy to connect with colleagues online, and with contacts across the country. Opportunity to learn new skills and test innovative ideas. The learning and professional and personal growth opportunities that were available this past 15 months was also unbelievable and contributed to a sense of reward. For many introverts, it has been wonderful for the world to function more at our preferred social approach. It is far less exhausting to zoom than to meet in person."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 responses: "Zoom meetings often seemed to enable more equitable participation and access than in person meetings."

Technology, Tools and Capacity

- **3 responses:** “Figuring out how to use online tools to effectively teach and engage with students.”
- “Being a part of a university that shifted so quickly to online and seeing the benefits of our new technology ecosystem.”
- “I have been working from campus, on my own for the last year. I only worked from home for the first 3 months which proved challenging with an old laptop.”
- “The efficiencies and cost effectiveness of doing site visits virtually.”

Q3. What have you found challenging, stressful, or a major barrier during COVID to support your work?

33 Responses divided into 4 themes. 2 responses N/A.

Flexibility, Time, Work-Life Balance, Commuting

- **8 responses:**” Long, long workdays - harder to create a 'hard stop' boundary, no commute makes the lines very blurry.”
- **3 responses:** “Anxiety due to health crisis. Working with those who don't like change/innovation. Less ability to recharge with friends and family outside work.”
- “The thought of going back to the office 100%.”

Engagement with Colleagues and Students

- **13 responses:** “Not being able to have face to face conversations with others, which leads to awkward, unproductive Zoom meetings. Colleagues who don't bother showing up or keeping their screen black for meetings. Also, that leads to a lack of collaboration and duplication (or triplication) of efforts. Missed small talk and getting to know each other on a deeper level. Building relationships solely online - a hybrid would be nice. In hindsight, it would have been beneficial to have an agreed upon practice of ending all meetings 10 minutes before the hour - just as universities do in class schedules for students. This would have given everyone involved more time to transition from one meeting to another which is much more typical of how it is in the in-person world.”
- **5 responses:** “Working with students who have been directly affected by COVID and managing their fears and anxieties. Its an added challenge and effects mental health. Students ended up quite confused for many things as they couldn't just stop in our office to chat, etc. There was also a real reckoning this last year with BIPOC and so many social issues and understanding that there are a lot of systemic barriers for students and actively working for change on a project taking a deep dive into EDI was challenging because seeing the bigger picture and wanting to affect change quickly but knowing that there is only so much you can chip away at and flag to leadership was a bit of a burden and definitely used up mental bandwidth in an already survival like mode we were collectively living in.”
- **3 responses:** “Communication has been sometimes challenging to get a hold of some clients/colleagues in a timely manner.”
- **2 responses:** “Businesses that hired our students that had financial difficulties making placing students harder. Maintaining connection to some students-less engaged with academic program area as a result of being less visible.”

Technology, Tools and Capacity

- **5 responses:** ‘Zoom and technology reliance fatigue. Working under continuous ambiguity and not being able to effectively plan ahead. Technology issues have held up some projects.’
- **3 responses:** “Sitting in front of a computer 7-8 hours/day--rather than moving around campus and elsewhere in the city--was physically and mentally challenging. Even with an ergonomic chair, my body has suffered the effects.”
- “Having to provide my own technology meant I had to upgrade my laptop and purchase a second monitor to work more effectively. Also, I had to move to have a better space to work from home. Not having employer support transparently to take home equipment at the beginning of the pandemic, and then no financial reimbursement for my internet, power, etc. was quite frustrating.”

Quality of Work and Institutional Supports

- **4 responses:** “Increased workload - more students, more placements more postings, yet no additional supports provided to manage influx. The amount of uncertainty was hard for me and a lot of other folk. The lack of funding and short staff made things challenging because priorities shifted a lot and often, I felt stretched thin and thinking about work in my off time, sometimes acting on it. I think that the eyes on us working from home, I wanted to overly prove that I was working at maximum capacity.”

Q4. What are some things that surprised you?

27 Responses; 1 response is N/A; Categorized in 3 themes.

Productivity and Working From Home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 responses: “How much working from home has meant to my wellbeing and personal motivation to do my work because I have more flexibility, I find that I do my work more efficiently and productively. I was surprised at how the flexibility meant for me as a person with a cognitive disability-- to choose to do work when I'm at my best really did allow me to do better work in less time than if I was forced into a typical workday schedule. The ability to CHOOSE means a lot in terms of engagement.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 responses: “How much I liked and how easily I could work from home and not have any discernible negative impact on my ability to do my job and continue to do it well. How much my position actually works better when working from home.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 responses: “How much of our job can be completed remotely and how much we were still able to build strong relationships with employers and students, even though we never met them FTF.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How much more time done things take online from booking meetings to managing access to files to how distant I feel from students and colleagues.”
Experiences with the Institution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 responses: “The speed to which our university pivoted due to the financial support the university put towards technology and the support to hire a large number of co-op students to help support the technology ecosystem. How all campus staff, faculty, students as well as employer partners adapted quickly and made the necessary adjustments.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 responses: “How we all quadrupled our workload, despite not having students on campus. How much more time things take online from booking meetings to managing access to files to how distant I feel from students and colleagues.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 responses:” We had excellent support from our institution, and it was easy to get information or reach out to my manager for assistance if necessary. New-found intimacy with my team and other colleagues. Our team met very regularly to share ideas and connect as much as possible to brainstorm any challenges we were faced with. Each of us contributed specific strengths and I think that was really important.”
Technologies, Tools and Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 responses: “That online offerings and events are better attended than in person offerings. Students and employers also prefer virtual meetings because it convenient and efficient. How much easier it is to schedule and conduct site visits over a virtual platform. Everyone can see a shared document and workshop ideas in real-time. I also haven't printed a piece of paper in 18 months. Far less impact on the environment.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 responses: “This job can be done online and remotely with relatively few hiccups - how much the students didn't mind engaging with us online - some were more communicative. Relationship building CAN be done virtually, working with students can be done virtually (and effectively!) through Zoom and other modes Effectiveness of work from home surprised me. Flexibility in work times was also helpful.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 responses: “The number of webinar resources was amazing-and seemed to have more time to access them. In some cases, I kept in touch with colleagues more than I would F2F.”

Section B: Strategies, Technologies, Innovation.

Q5. What strategies have you implemented during COVID to support your work? What strategies will you keep as you return to campus? What will you change as you return to work?

32 Responses divided into three categories for each of the three questions in Q5. 1 Skipped.

Strategies Implemented During COVID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 responses: “Setting up a proper home office (dual screens, standing desk, office supplies, post-it white boards, etc). It makes is much easier to do both complex work and simple tasks over the long term. Keeping organized. Time blocking, forcing myself to take a lunch break, and micro-scheduling my daily routines (ex; scheduling in lunch or walking breaks). Remained flexible in workflow - if I need a break, I take one. I have also trained myself not to 'need' paper copies of documents - everything is available digitally so there is no need to print.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 responses: “MS Teams is a good communication tool among colleagues; Close teamwork. Regular meetings. Sharing and collaborating on documents "in the cloud".”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 responses: “Online site visits. Great time saver. Using Zoom for one on one meetings; using tools in LMS system to provide real time resume and cover letter feedback; using Loom to record screens and short messages; continuously surveying using Google forms; Slack.”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Scheduling rather than drop in -fillable forms and pdf’s -accessibility measures when interacting with students and having a deep understanding of some of the hardships and barriers students often encounter.”
Strategies Keeping With Return to Campus
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 9 responses: “Utilizing different technology and activities to engage students. Information sessions online have better turn out. Video calls, Zoom, virtual meetings are more efficient. We are trying to keep some of them virtual, but they may revert to in-person meetings, which are less productive. Appointment booking software will definitely stay as we return to campus. Allowing students to meet remotely. Remote site visits if possible. Continue to offer workshops online for students as they have requested.” 2. 4 responses: “I hope to keep my regular breaks and not overworking myself like I have done in the past. The work life balance has made a huge difference and I don't want to lose that. I don't know what I'll change, but I imagine some of the flexibilities will be lost (working out at lunch, walking before work as I will have to commute now during that time).” 3. 2 responses: “We have started regular meetings - first weekly, and now monthly. These have been very productive and good for our team and we will keep them up. We have encouraged everyone to return to the office, so I'm expecting that will make it easier for team collaboration.”
Strategies Changing With Return to Campus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 responses: “Will move to a hybrid of virtual/online processes, service offerings and in-person now that we see that we can do everything online. Hybrid conferences ensure better representation at events. Hybrid classes keep everyone engaged or better engaged. Offer a hybrid approach to student coaching and advising appointments, so students can select either in person or online appointments with coop staff. We will test drive providing some of our training in a hybrid model this fall. Will also deliver employer lunch events and keep some of the virtual technology to allow for better meetings across locations/campuses.” • 4 responses: “More discipline to daily routine when getting back to work; late night work shall need to reduce. I will be doing fewer extra projects when I go back, so that I can keep balance and focus on the quality of the most key pieces of work.” • “Trying to have regular check-in meetings and shorter team meetings - this was mixed where some weeks we went well overtime in our meetings, which was frustrating.”

Q6. What new technologies did you find most useful to you during COVID and why? What technologies will you continue to use moving forward?

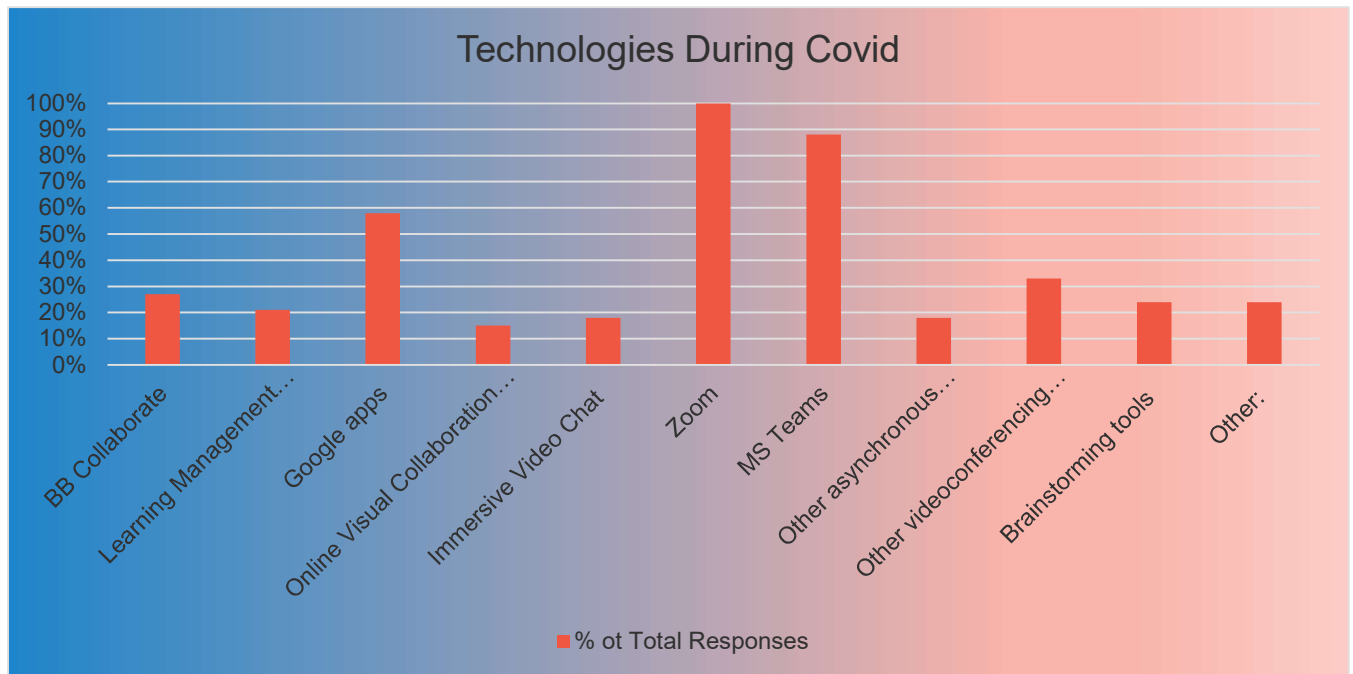
32 Responses; 1 Skipped.

Technologies:		
<i>Video Conferencing Tools:</i>	Zoom: 31 MS Teams: 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom for all meetings, advising and site visits, information sessions • MS Teams instant messaging to keep more casual connections. • IT added the phone tool to MS Teams that has helped • MS Teams for collaboration - used this a lot when working on shared documents, for hiring processes, for online workshops, coaching, and meetings, • Zoom worked more consistently than others.
<i>Workplace Communication Tools:</i>	Slack: 4 Skype BB Collaborate: 2 Loom LMS System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slack for communicating with teams from other post-secondary institutions; main communication tool with students • Loom to create instructional videos • Teach and facilitate workshops on a variety of platforms, trying to embed interactive activities, breakout rooms, surveys, polls, google docs, Padlet, Mentimeter • Event planning software • Accessible social media methods • Website editing tools • LMS to manage student documents and provide feedback • BB Collaborate partially for workshops
<i>Other tools:</i>	Slido Hybrid Workshops SharePoint Adobe Acrobat Google jam boards Google forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveying students with Google forms • Google docs for sharing resources and collaborating on documents with colleagues from other post-secondary institutions

Q7. From the list below, please select the technologies you began to use during COVID:

33 Responses

Answer Choices:	Responses:	% of Total Responses
Blackboard Collaborate	9	27.27
Learning Management Technologies	7	21.21
Google apps (e.g., jam boards)	19	57.58
Online Visual Collaboration Platforms (e.g., Miro)	5	15.15
Immersive Video Chat (e.g., Kumospace)	6	18.18
Zoom	33	100
MS Teams	29	87.88
Other asynchronous collaboration tools	6	18.18
Other videoconferencing tools	11	33.33
Brainstorming tools	5	15.15
Other Comments: GoToMeeting, Hopin, Slack, Asana, WEBEX, Discord, Loom	8	24.24
TOTAL Responses:	33	100%



Q8. What are some innovations you implemented during COVID?

21 Responses with 6 responses N/A (Unsure, don't understand question, adapting to technology, didn't have any, etc.); 12 Skipped. Responses have been grouped into 3 topic areas below:

Innovations Implemented During COVID:		
Online Events, Career Fairs, Conferences, Guest Speakers, Networking	Student Communication	Course Delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 responses: "Hosted several across institution Career Fairs on different platforms which were very successful." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 responses: "Virtual open door and sharing my personal Zoom Room ID directly through the student booking system." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 responses: "Online asynchronous workshops and course delivery, creating instructional videos through Loom; Webinars."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 responses: "Pre-employment conferences and inviting guest speakers hosted on Zoom." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 responses: "Site and monitoring visits through Zoom." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 responses: "Running mock interviews via Zoom with large number of students, and community members, both on and off campus."
"Breakout rooms and Kumospace for networking and panel events."	"Team building games like Jeopardy; Jam Boards used extensively."	"Hybrid workshops: Live online (and static) resulted in students being more prepared (resume and cover letter) prior to individual advising."
"Joint virtual Career Fair with 2 other institutions using Eventus Platform."	"Online fillable forms for co-op enrollment."	"Adding surveys, polls, Mentimeter or padlet to BB Collaborate for participation with students in engaging ways."
	"Providing feedback to documents through LMS system."	"Group site visits in different jobs and locations to share personal experiences. Optional participation and very successful."
	"Greater use of Slack."	

Section C: Shifts in Your Work

Q9. How has working from home impacted student engagement? What innovations did you find useful?

30 Responses with 4 responses N/A; 3 Skipped.

Responses grouped into themes related to levels of engagement and strategies used.

Greater Student Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 responses: "Virtual sessions had higher engagement levels as students found ease of online appointments, sharing documents on zoom."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 responses: "Some students were more engaged because of Slack. Break out rooms were useful. Some students are more likely to engage because they are not physically in Canada (or the lower mainland)."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We had better turn out to virtual events than the in-person ones in years past when we looked at attendance data."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "My student placement numbers increased by 50%."
Loss of Student Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 responses: "Students do find it hard to express themselves virtually. Were less engaged because they were burnt out or overwhelmed by all the online work. Students aren't able to stop in and ask questions so confusion about process and other things has skyrocketed."
No Change in Student Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 responses: "No complaints from students - they have shifted easily to online appointments, etc."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I think for some students, they remained engaged. For others, loss of engagement."
Strategies used for Student Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 responses: "Making use of video platforms to introduce instructor to students, interactive PPTs, interactive presentations, MS Teams tools such as whiteboards and Google Jam boards, online polling and other built-in engagement tools during online workshops or course lessons (small group work, polls, mentee, etc.)."

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 responses: “Zoom (some students don't switch on their camera) and Slack were main ways to keep in touch with students.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 responses: “Establishing regular routines, regular check-ins, requiring students to touch base with advisor at least once, offering drop in sessions, offering a variety of days/times for students to connect because of time zones. Being open to trying new technology, sometimes having to connect via phone if other technology wasn't working. Basically, being flexible and responsive.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 responses: “Finding ways to create teams is helpful to get students interacting. Maybe a single, lower stakes assignment that is based on their own interest. Anything that requires students to provide input during a session get them engaged.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I found looking at our events with an accessible lens and universal design that encouraged barrier free and supported diverse participation very important and elicited great engagement.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Mostly it's hard to know if students are learning in a session.”

Q10. How did you change your approach to employer engagement and job development? Did employers report any perspectives about the shifts in practices related to WIL?

23 Responses with 8 Responses N/A or 'no change reported'; 10 Skipped.

Employer Engagement and Job Development:	Employer Perspectives:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We were able to meet with many more employers and market student talent to them with much less associated costs and travel costs.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It was great to connect with so many [employers] and they were very keen, sometimes overwhelmingly, to engage with students which put a lot of work and strain on our time. We had many positive results and increased connection to employers virtually. Employers were looking to build talent pipelines and access funding, so it was great.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We learned a lot about the onboarding needs of employers - and reinforced the value of our relationship-based approach to employer engagement.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Most have adapted to pivoting to continue to support students in co-op. Many employers are more talkative over Teams/ Zoom. I have seen increased depth of relationship with employers.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Initially we provided a lot more resources for virtual onboarding, tech use, student support in remote environment, etc.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Employers were very open to zoom meetings (site visits or other wise) and most were able to provide the same opportunities to students. Employers adapted quickly to working with students remotely. Saved travel time and was able to coordinate throughout the course of the day- much more flexible. Was able to meet employer's needs much easier i.e. their hours of work.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We used some WIL institutionally to look at some of our internal structures and areas for improvement and I think our institution became more aware of the value of student capabilities and the amazing work they can do to enrich our local communities. It was awesome to see how impressive their on-campus WIL projects turned out when depts needed to pivot and find internal opportunities when employers could not take on practicum or work experience students. Hope that lives on!” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Many employers have shifted their attitude towards being more open for offering remote work options for WIL students in the future, even after the pandemic is over. Some reported a positive impact of an increased candidate pool, others felt a negative impact due to greater competition from other organizations.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The number of jobs saw a big increase, so there were more calls by phone and Zoom to new/ prospective employers. More online interactions with employers versus face to face. Employers were able to engage with students more through video conference or various platforms and deliver info sessions online for students on campus.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Many of my employers are now more open to remote working, but a lot still prefer to be face-to-face with students.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom site visits which was really effective., bringing in guest speakers from around the world through Zoom. Online career fairs and information sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the program, some coops/ placements/ practicums had to be cancelled or deferred to due the industry focus.

Q11. As you and your colleagues prepare to return to campus, is there anything you advise others to pursue?

22 Responses; 1 N/A; 11 Skipped.

Hybrid Models
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 responses: “Hybrid approach to everything - now that staff have experience WFH, allow them to continue 1-3 days at home. People have gotten so used to the flexibility that work from home offers, and this is a huge component of loving the work that we do, and the place that we work. It would be nice for these flexibilities to stay somewhat in place as we return to the office. Encourage your institution to maintain the best parts of remote working and develop a working from home option strategy-saves office space and parking costs to the school.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 responses: “Survey students to see what type of service they would like (in person or remote). Student engagement surveys show that students want to continue with a hybrid model of both in person and online service options. Keep up the digital presence as many of the students had a hard time with the lack of inperson connection but many, many students also benefit greatly from a remote learning environment and are grieving the 'return to normal'.”
Student Accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Constant check-in with students. I found a number of our students, especially International students received support as needed. Do weekly hallway chats on ideas you can help each other with. It is informal, on teams and have weekly topics. It was fully drop in and was noted as valuable for connection and learning from peers. I think it was 1 hour each week.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Also, the shift to much more inclusive events, ensure we have as many tools available for all students to participate in workshops, appointments and employer events. Make programming accessible by maintaining an accessible digital space, there is room for both in our 'next normal.' I'm sad to say that students with disabilities may be back against many barriers and when we look at overall student needs there have been many financial, scheduling, participation, childcare, housing, transportation, ability to have more choice in courses and other benefits enjoyed by intersectional student populations. We cannot lose that progress and access to alternative methods of education delivery.”
For Other Practitioners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 responses: “Be considerate to each individual's circumstances. I'd like to know what other Co-op folks are doing. I'd like to hear more about the tech that others found successful.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 responses: We are making time for conversation and catch-up. Need to slow down on straight production as we have been the past year. All work and no social time makes for boring co-op representatives.”