Issue 1
December 7, 2020

BC Co-op and Work-Integrated Learning (COWIL) Initiative

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Welcome!



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first edition of the BC Co-op and Work-integrated Learning (COWIL) Newsletter!

This quarterly bulletin aims to keep you informed on the 66 work-integrated learning (WIL) projects currently underway as part of the COWIL initiative across 25 post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.

In this inaugural edition, we highlight the broad themes that the 66 projects are focused on, interview a project manager leading a pan-provincial project, and highlight an upcoming event which promises to provide tools that promote “Diversity in WIL”.

We also provide details regarding a few COWIL projects focused on supporting Indigenous students or students with disabilities.

We hope that you will find the newsletter useful to learn more about COWIL projects, connect with other project leaders to discuss best practices and learnings, and collaborate, where possible, to add value to the WIL practitioners’ community in BC.

Thank you for your time and attention!

66 COWIL Projects: Themes and Areas of Focus

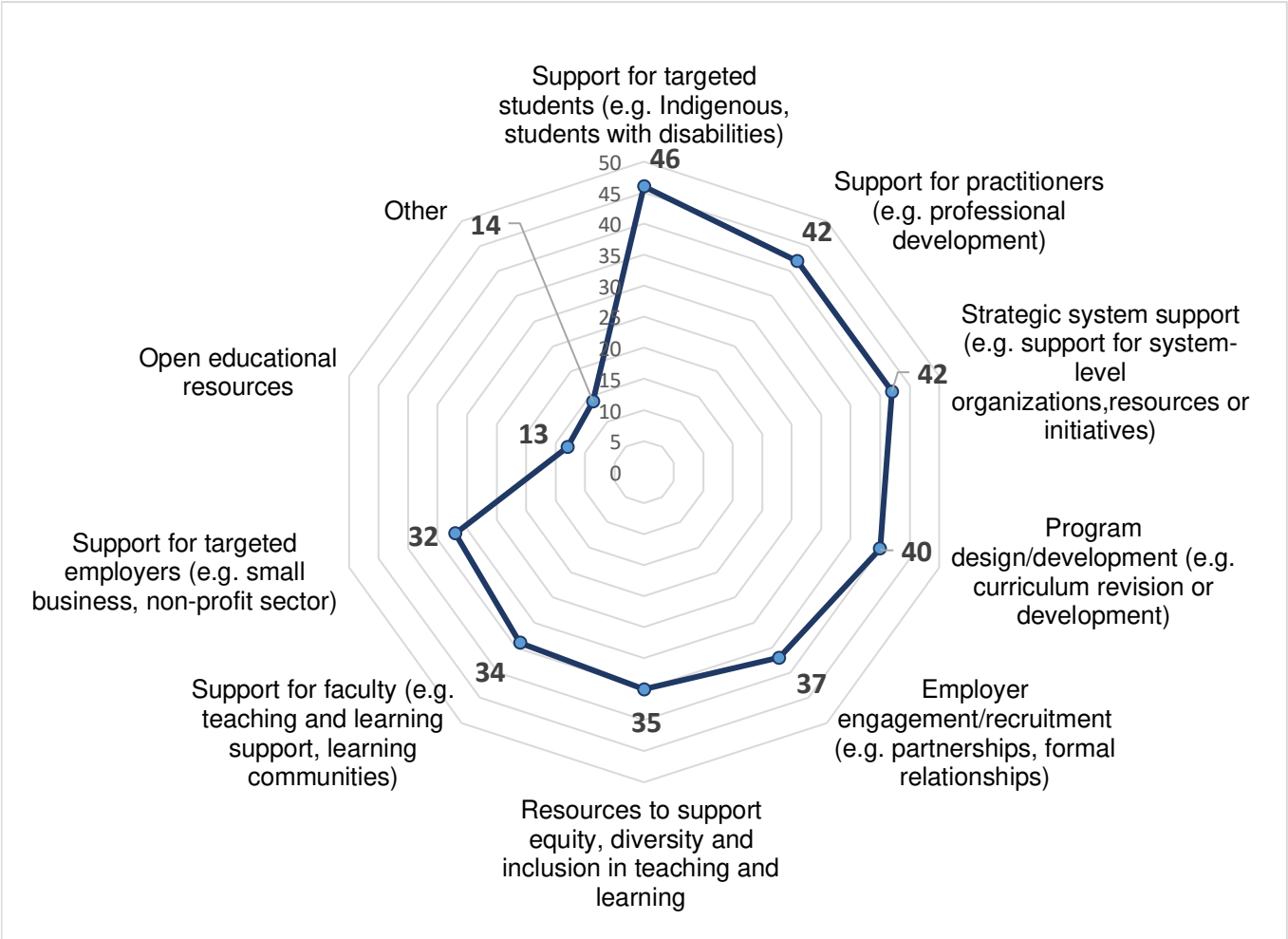
The radar chart below highlights the key themes that the 66 COWIL projects are focused on.

The headings in the chart below indicate the priority areas self-identified by the project team when submitting their funding applications.

Note: A given project may have multiple focus areas. As a result, the total count of focus areas in the chart is more than the total number of projects (66).

Top 3 themes for the 66 projects:

- Support for targeted students (e.g. Indigenous students, students with disabilities)
- Support for WIL practitioners (e.g. digital resources: tip-sheets, checklists for WIL practitioners)
- Strategic system support (e.g. ACE-WIL resource hub, technology for WIL across the province)



In conversation with Natalie Shearer, Project Manager, Simon Fraser University (SFU)

Natalie Shearer is leading a pan-provincial project to enhance system-wide supports for the continued professional development of co-op and work-integrated learning practitioners and programs.

Natalie graciously agreed to share details about her project goals, challenges that she has encountered over the past few months, and suggestions for project leaders leading similar initiatives. The conversation below is a preview of this discussion, please view the complete video interview here.



[Shadab]: Natalie, how has your project progressed over the last six months? What have you enjoyed about it the most?

[*Natalie*]: *It was a bit of a slow start. I joined SFU in this role on March 16th 2020, when most of us started working from home in response to COVID. To launch the project within that context was a bit of a challenge. However, as we have become accustomed to remote work and learning, the project has picked up speed.*

I've really loved the opportunity to work with so many ACE-WIL practitioners and members. From talking to ACE-WIL members about their needs, to working with the ACE-WIL Committees to launch professional development initiatives, everybody has been wonderful and generous of their time and resources. Such a collaborative group of people!

"To launch the project within that (COVID) context was a bit of a challenge".

[Shadab]: Has the pandemic impacted your project? If yes, how did you adjust the work plan to ensure that your project goals weren't impacted significantly?

[Natalie]: *I was somewhat fortunate that I started the project right at the beginning of our response to COVID. As a result, I was able to create a project plan keeping in mind how it would roll out within the context of COVID. I was also able to quickly pivot the project vision to a more remote environment.*

And there has been some benefit of this (remote) model. One of the key goals of my project was to make professional development opportunities more accessible to institutions which are not on the Lower Mainland. By moving to a remote environment, we are now creating PD resources which are (virtually) accessible to all member institutions across BC.

"I would collaborate more with other project leaders to learn from their experiences".

In conversation with Natalie Shearer, Project Manager, Simon Fraser University (SFU) continued…



"I meet regularly with a few project leaders who are leading pan-provincial projects focused on creating digital resources to support the COWIL initiative.

"We share ideas, coordinate work, and strive to establish some relationships".

[Shadab]: In hindsight, what are the 3 project-related tasks that you would differently to achieve better outcomes?

***[Natalie]**: A couple of things: I would engage with the ACE-WIL Committees earlier in the process as it has been such a fruitful process to understand from them what the member needs are, and the initiatives that are currently underway.*

Secondly, I would collaborate more with other project leaders to learn from their experiences, and finally, take a more flexible approach to project planning to avoid stress, especially given the uncertain environment that we work in.

[Shadab]: Have you reached out to other project leaders leading COWIL projects? If so, what were your learnings from the discussions?

***[Natalie]:** I definitely have! I meet regularly with a few project leaders who are leading pan-provincial projects focused on creating digital resources to support the COWIL initiative.*

We share ideas, co-ordinate work, and strive to establish some relationships. It's tough to meet all project leaders as they are spread across the province. But these early meetings have helped me identify more impactful ways to create professional development resources as we continue to collaborate and share.

[Shadab]: Natalie, what support would you like to see in the future from the COWIL project management team?

To hear Natalie's response, and additional tips for COWIL project leaders, please view the complete interview here.

Upcoming Event: Six tools for Diversity in WIL

What: Six tools for Diversity in WIL: Supporting Employers to Attract, Hire and Onboard Students from International Pathways (**SFIP**).

These tools are an outcome of a COWIL project launched in February 2020, titled: "Develop toolkit for employers and organizations to assist in hiring international students".

This 90-minute virtual professional development session will present a set of six tools to support diversity in WIL and share a research-driven approach for WIL practitioners to support employers in attracting, hiring, and onboarding students from international pathways (SFIP). Participants will interact with the tools, developed by the ACE-WIL Research Committee, and will learn more about what employers have told us about hiring SFIP.

When: December 9, 10 am- 11.30 am PST

How to register: https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/JYLLF85



Audience: WIL practitioners in British Columbia (ACE-WIL members) and Employers.

Key Highlights:

The ACE-WIL Research Committee will:

1. Share the project background and key findings regarding hiring SFIP for WIL opportunities
2. Introduce the six tools (best practices, tips, and checklists) to promote diversity in WIL.
3. Host an employer panel to discuss contemporary best practices in attracting, hiring, and onboarding SFIP.
4. Facilitate breakout sessions (employers and WIL practitioners) to discuss how the six tools can be implemented.

Examples of projects focused on supporting Indigenous students or students with disabilities

Post-secondary institution	Project Title	Contact
University of British Columbia	Effective WIL Programs for Indigenous Students	Julie Walchli
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	Re-design co-op curriculum for Inclusivity and Employment Readiness	Lindsay Wood
University of Victoria/BC-WIL	Indigenous Co-op Resource Hub	Andrea Giles
Thompson Rivers University	Experiential and WIL Initiatives	Shawn Read
Simon Fraser University/ BC-WIL	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Resource Hub	Muriel Klemetski
Simon Fraser University/ BC-WIL	Co-op practitioner curriculum, community of practice, and audit of programs	Muriel Klemetski
Simon Fraser University	Indigenous Student Engagement	Muriel Klemetski
Okanagan College	Addressing Barriers for Indigenous Students	Alison Beaumont
Okanagan College	Accessibility Initiative	Alison Beaumont
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	Implement Co-op at NVIT	Margaret Hohner
Simon Fraser University	Expanding WIL Opportunities with an Accessibility approach	Muriel Klemetski
University of Victoria	Expand Indigenous International WIL Exchange Program	Karima Ramji

Provide your inputs



Would you like to share something for the future editions of this newsletter? Your project updates, best practices, learnings or challenges? Want to connect with colleagues leading WIL-focused projects across BC post-secondary institutions?

If so, please contact Shadab Shah, Project Manager, BC Co-Op and Work-Integrated Learning (COWIL) Initiative at shadabshah@uvic.ca for additional information or support.

We will be back with more updates and COWIL news in March 2021!