

Co-op Education and Student Employment Circle

Description of current state of UBC and OUC Co-op and Student Employment Centre (CSEC)

Co-op education and student employment at OUC and UBC share many of the same visions and objectives but are implemented very differently. The current OUC model has evolved out of the needs of the college and the needs of the community. It is a centralized function with staff in two locations, South Kelowna, and North Kelowna campuses. We currently service all five campuses, primarily with co-op education, but also including graduate and summer student employment and career services. As part of the Student Affairs department, we have been able to coordinate with the other student services including international, financial aid, advising, and counseling, when needed. Centralization has allowed for a team approach whereby coordinators are able to fill in for each other.

UBC-V's co-op education is typically tied to each of the faculties rather than a centralized department. This is due in part to the size of UBC-V. The UBC business faculty also offers career services through their co-op office but career services are also offered as a separate department to students from other facilities.

Co-op education work terms at OUC are included on a student's transcript, but are not "credit" as such. Co-op does not appear on the OUC diploma or degree. Also, the work term fees have been historically lower than at UBC at \$250 per term versus over \$400 per term this last year.

The UBC-V Co-op application process is more rigorous with not only academic criteria (similar to OUC) being considered, but also a submitted statement, including student's interest, skills and abilities and the impact that Co-op participation is expected to have on life and career. Overall, with these elements and a final intake interview, there is a more formal screening of prospective applicants for representation as suitable institutional "Ambassadors" to the business community.

UBC-V's co-op placement process is more structured. Students apply to all the jobs in each placement cycle and they are matched to employers, not necessarily to either's first pick. OUC co-op has been a much less structured process whereby students apply to each job of interest as it arrives. This sequential process has been effective for local employers as their staffing needs are often "just-in-time".

Lastly UBC co-op is offered in more faculties than OUC co-op. For example, UBC offers co-op in Arts. OUC has done a pilot co-op program in Arts but did not continue with it.

UBC-O Co-op and Student Employment Vision

The CSEC Circle members believe that student employment, co-op education, and career services are vital components and should be part of UBC-O's program planning. From our experience, the students here generally demonstrate that they require much development in career management including job search skills, financing their education, resume and letter writing, interview skills, and professional conduct/ethics.

The co-op coordinators act as a liaison between the faculties, the business community, and other stakeholders. The need for liaison will be great during the transition to provide continuity and after implementation due to increased economic activity in the Okanagan region (due to UBC, etc). In smaller labour markets, like the Okanagan, personal, face-to-face relationship building is an important aspect of doing business. UBC-O would benefit greatly from the relationships built over the last nearly 20 years of offering co-op programs in the Okanagan.

Co-op and graduate employment helps with a variety of university goals. First, strong employment of co-op students and grads helps with recruitment and retention of students. Students who are working throughout school and after are better able to manage their debt load. Second, graduate employment strengthens ties with the business community as these grads provide bridges back to the university through Alumni association and fund-raising.

The Co-op and Student Employment Centre could offer these services in a manner that employs the best of both worlds by having a coordinator assigned to each faculty. Currently, OUC has well developed Science, Business, and Technology co-op programs and The CSEC circle sees an excellent opportunity to continue with our previously developed Arts co-op efforts. Each coordinator would work vertically with the co-op team in Vancouver but also the coordinators could also act horizontally as a team at UBC-O in Kelowna.

The Co-op and Student Employment Circle members have concluded that students and the local business community both need personal contacts on campus. Not all of these business and career services can be delivered effectively through technology. An on-site employment presence provides the benefits listed above to help achieve university goals during the transition and after.

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