Workplace Experience Program

a work-term prelude for international students
Introductions

Jennifer Coombs

Anna Cranston
The Background

- Management Career Services, Faculty of Management, Dalhousie
- Commerce program
- Mandatory Co-op
  - 250 co-op work-terms per semester
## Commerce Co-op Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Study Term</td>
<td>Study Term</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Study Term</td>
<td>Work Term 1</td>
<td>Study Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Work Term 2</td>
<td>Study Term</td>
<td>Work Term 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Study Term</td>
<td>Study Term</td>
<td>Graduation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Growing International Population

Number of international students completing winter term

- # international students
- # Chinese students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># international students</th>
<th># Chinese students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initiatives to Support International Students since 2012

- International Student Success Program (ISSP)
- COMM 1700: Preparing for Study and Work in Canada
- Intercultural awareness staff training
- Specific resource development
Increasing number of work terms completed in China

Location of Chinese students' work terms

- Canada
- China

Bar chart showing an increasing number of work terms completed in China from 2009 to 2013.
The China Challenge

Obstacles

• Students ‘giving up’ on Canada
• Difficult to communicate with employers
• Falsification of work terms

Solutions

• China Liaison hired
• Showcase success stories
• Open doors / debunk the myths
Nova Scotia: Now or Never

• “Yes, there is a crisis, and it does threaten the basic economic and demographic viability of our province…”

• Immigration is essential

• Created movement to expand effort to retain international students
The Dilemma

NS needs immigrants

International students don’t feel comfortable seeking work here

How do we affect change?
This is How...

The Time is Now!

The stars aligned

“Let’s Make it Happen!”

May 2014

Guiding principles:
1. Keep it simple
2. Doesn’t have to be big
3. Make an impact

Rapid Task Force

Pilot June ‘14

Experimental trial

See what happens... adjust and reset if necessary
Objectives:

- To provide 1st & 2nd international students BComm Co-op students with an opportunity to gain familiarity with the Canadian workplace culture;

- For these students to build connections with Canadian employers;

- To build confidence in our international students when job searching
The Fundamentals

- Co-op ‘lite’ for 1st / 2nd yr international students
- Flexible Scheduling
- 35 Hours Total
- Corporate Culture Experience
- Job Shadow
- Unpaid
The Shoe on the Other Foot

Ask Yourself:

• How would you feel about finding work in China?
• What would Chinese workplace culture be like?
• What would your concerns be?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LINEAR-ACTIVE</strong></th>
<th><strong>MULTI-ACTIVE</strong></th>
<th><strong>REACTIVE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talks half the time</td>
<td>Talks most of the time</td>
<td>Listens most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does one thing at a time</td>
<td>Does several things at once</td>
<td>Reacts to partner’s action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans ahead step by step</td>
<td>Plans grand outline only</td>
<td>Looks at general principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite but direct</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Polite, indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly conceals feelings</td>
<td>Displays feelings</td>
<td>Conceals feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronts with logic</td>
<td>Confronts emotionally</td>
<td>Never confronts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislikes losing face</td>
<td>Has good excuses</td>
<td>Must not lose face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely interrupts</td>
<td>Often interrupts</td>
<td>Doesn’t interrupt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-oriented</td>
<td>People-oriented</td>
<td>Very people-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses mainly facts</td>
<td>Feelings before facts</td>
<td>Statements are promises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth before diplomacy</td>
<td>Flexible truth</td>
<td>Diplomacy over truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes impatient</td>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>Patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited body language</td>
<td>Unlimited body language</td>
<td>Subtle body language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respects officialdom</td>
<td>Seeks out key person</td>
<td>Uses connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separates the social and professional</td>
<td>Interweaves the social and professional</td>
<td>Connects the social and professional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Program Blueprint
Recruitment Process

Students

- September Classroom Announcements
- Marketing begins
- Information Session with ISSP
- Continued Information Sessions – MCS & ISSP
- Applications due
- Assessment of applications & individual appointments if needed
- Match made: final individual appointments with students

Employers

- Partnership Appreciation Event
- Initial emails to employers & marketing
- Prep Session
- Targeted emails and phone calls to returning and potential hosts
- Introduction meeting with student and host

Fall

Winter

Summer
Making the Match

Step 1  WEP Prep Session
Making the Match

Step 1: WEP Prep Session

Step 2: Match Made

WEP Prep Session
Making the Match

Step 1: WEP Prep Session

Step 2: Match Made

Step 3: Host Introduction Meeting

WEP Prep Session

Match Made

Host Introduction Meeting
Making the Match

Huaxun Wang

+ COSSETTE

= Workplace Experience Program

Congratulations!
During WEP

- Learning and reflection through the Activity Log
- Provide direction to the host organization
- Centered around 4 learning goals:
  1. Gaining an understanding of Canadian organizational culture
  2. Developing awareness of Canadian office etiquette
  3. Growing personal network by performing informational interviews with company employees
  4. Appreciating personal learning through guided reflection
Activity Log

Student name, organization & supervisor

Timesheet

Total hours & signatures
Ideas on how to gain exposure to complete learning goals

Behaviours and/or situations to observe & reflect on

Observations & reflection
The staff work together when a problem comes up. Also, they don’t keep the relationship completely professional. They talk about family and home as well. When they are not busy they were talking about summer vacation and other stuff.

Staff work together on projects. They keep the relationship professional when working but sometimes they talk about their personal life as well…

Goal #1: Organization Culture
Goal #1: Organization Culture

Customer Service

The standard for customer service is very high. Everybody is very polite and the customers seem happy. Also, they chat a little bit to make the customers feel comfortable.

Professional. People work with clients through phone calls mainly. All clients are addressed formally.
Goal #2: Office Etiquette

Clothing

Business casual. Supervisors dress more formal than other staff... they have a “casual Friday”.

If it is a very important day for the company, every staff wears a suit, but normally they will not wear a suit every day.

They wear professional every day, but starting from June until September, they wear business casual, and the office has a “casual Friday” that they can wear jeans if they want.
Goal #3: Staff Interviews

- 2 informational interviews
- Build connections
- Gain industry information and advice

When deciding to where to work, what made you decide to work here?

What was the toughest accounting task you had to solve in your career so far?

What suggestions would you give me as an international student starting a career in Halifax?
Goal #4: Personal Learning & Reflection

- Completed at the end of WEP
- Guided reflection
- Returned to Coordinator
Partnership Appreciation
Employer Evaluations

16 Host Organizations

81% Returning
19% New

# Summer 2016

100% Organization benefited by participating in the program

“We had the chance to showcase what we do each day and work together as a team to make our students’ experience valuable.”

“Our reputation is enhanced in the internal and external communities when we support this type of initiative.”

“We need these students to stay in Halifax and add to the quality of our workforce. Immigration is very important to our future.”
Student Evaluations

33 Students

45% 1st year

55% 2nd year

73% Participated in workplace activities and/or discussions

93% Canadian workplace was different than expected

“I did not expect that the workers would be so opened to help and answer questions.”

“The culture was totally different than I thought... people respect each other, and the company gives people more opportunity to share their ideas.”

“I thought most people would be serious, but they are funny... and willing to listen to my opinion”
Student Evaluations

Confidence: Before & After

- Neutral
- Not Confident
- Somewhat Confident
- Confident
- Very Confident

Before vs. After
Outcomes

2014 was the first time that the number of Chinese students working in Canada surpassed those in China.
Recognition
Key Learning for Future Success

Grow the Employer Pool

- Only 16 hosts to date
- Start earlier (and earlier)
- More recognition and thanks
- Sell the story even more

Student Accountability

- Schedule check-in (mini WSV?)
- Consider asking for Activity Log submission as it happens
- Focus on what similarities they discovered - break down the myths and barriers.

Dedicated Resources
• Prezi:
  • https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmQV3SY1mQU
Successes

Miranda - Clearwater

Pengpeng - McInnes Cooper

Wendi - Scotiabank
In her own words...

Wendi - Scotiabank
Any Questions?