

# Community and Workplace Partnerships

## YEAR IN REVIEW 2020-21

Connecting community and industry partners with faculty and students, the Community and Workplace Partnerships (CWP) team supports the integration of experiential learning opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom.



# STATS AT A GLANCE

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**2235 STUDENTS COMPLETED CWP EXPERIENCES  
IN 56 COURSES (28 CSL; 28 WP)**

**1250 STUDENTS IN CSL PLACEMENTS/PROJECTS**

**985 STUDENTS IN WORKPLACE PARTNERSHIPS  
EXPERIENCES**

## STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

**93.5% HAD A POSITIVE OVERALL EXPERIENCE**

**88.5% WOULD RECOMMEND CWP TO FUTURE  
STUDENTS**

## INTRODUCTION

At the outset of the 2020-21 year we were still new to the remote environment but had laid out a clear focus for delivering curricular experiential learning through the pandemic and in the remote environment. We continued to seek greater understanding of the needs of our partners and to re-imagine our models, partnerships, and supports to all stakeholders in the current context. In Spring 2020 we shifted to completely remote options and began preparing for fall. Our position regarding in-person activities, which for 2020-21 were not mandatory for any student, but remained a possibility for some courses, was clearly communicated to all stakeholders. As partners began to implement new ways of delivering their programs and services, we uncovered remote and virtual opportunities for the upcoming term. We established modified models, particularly for placement-based community-service learning and internship courses, and we implemented clear processes related to health and safety and risk management for both in-person and virtual opportunities. From this point, we launched into a year like no other!

The following provides highlights from 2020-21 and a snapshot of our evaluation data. We continue to be amazed by, and grateful for, the continued support of community and employer partners as well as their flexibility and creativity during this challenging year.

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## CWP IN THE NEWS

[This spotlight](#) from spring 2020 highlights Laurier graduate students using remote research skills in community partnerships.

In fall 2020, we received funding for our [Virtual Village Project](#) in partnership with Fairview Parkwood Communities.

Check out [this spotlight](#) on a Department of Health Studies student and host organization John Noble Home.

Kinesiology professor Dr. Alanna Harman collaborated with CWP to embed a [Marketing Case Competition](#) into her fourth-year course: Marketing in Sport & Physical Activity.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DAY

Thanks to funding provided by the Student Life Levy, we were able to hold this event in February 2021. Our first virtual engagement fair saw more than 650 visitors to 27 virtual booths and more than 2000 unique page views. Read more about the event [here](#).

# PANDEMIC RECOVERY: MODELS AND ADAPTATIONS

In March 2021, we collaborated with Educational Development to offer two sessions highlighting some of the courses we have worked with over the past year. Eight faculty members joined us to share about their approaches to Experiential Learning in the Remote Environment. We have included some of these examples as well as others below to demonstrate the creativity and flexibility of our faculty as well as the community and employer partners they engaged with to offer meaningful experiences to students across a range of disciplines.

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**GC308: Questioning Ability – Partnering with Parents for Community Living (PCL)**, students spent time with residents living in PCL community homes via Zoom. Students had the opportunity to learn from the experiences, stories and leadership of adults with intellectual disabilities.

**BU422: Market Research –** With returning partner TD Labs as the client, students conducted focus groups to address a high-level business problem identified by the partner. They took their market research and presented potential solutions to their client.

**HS200: Social Determinants of Health –** In-person CSL placements were not widely available due to the pandemic so students participated in the Laurier International Cultural Conversations (LICC) initiative. Students met in small groups, taking part in 5 conversations via Zoom, discussing topics focused on social determinants of health.

**GS461: Humanitarianism: Gift & Power –** Approaching the course with CSL for the first time, this course partnered with Compass Refugee Centre and students planned and hosted a virtual event for World Refugee Rights day.

**PS276: Developmental Psychology of Youth & Adolescents –** In place of weekly CSL placements, in Winter 2021 students created a resource for partners with youth programs, including the public library, the city, and Big Brothers Big Sisters. Filled with detailed activity ideas and implementation plans, partners have this useful resource to help with their virtual programming now and in future.

**KP371: Disability & Physical Activity –** Students designed and delivered a one-hour activity for the adult day program, Adults in Motion. This project included a suitable warm-up, main activity, and cool-down that they conducted with participants live, via Zoom.

**FR300: Teach, Learn & Think in French -** Partnering with public schools and community organizations that offer French programming, students either volunteered weekly in virtual placements or completed projects remotely. In both adapted models, the students had opportunities to work directly with French educators, supporting education-related tasks such as lesson planning, and classroom instruction.

**ES296: Introduction to Sustainability –** Students worked in groups dedicated to a specific challenge facing the Township of Woolwich. They learned about various solutions and made a recommendation to the Township based on applicability, ingenuity and feasibility. The course would usually include a visit to the host community and in-person “pitches” to the partner. These elements of the experience moved to a virtual format.

**HS322: Health Policy –** In place of an in-person job shadow, students conducted an interview via zoom with professionals in a variety of healthcare settings including community health centres, public health units, and hospitals.

# WHAT FACULTY ARE SAYING

We are fortunate to work with faculty members in many different departments including Global Citizenship, Political Science, Kinesiology, Health Studies, Psychology and Youth and Children's studies. Responses from faculty partners were encouraging given the added challenges of embedding experiential learning into courses in the remote teaching context.

- Faculty noted that the experiences coordinated with the support of CWP helped to build student confidence, professional skills, and make connections with course material.
- Applying course concepts to community organization and workplace settings was beneficial to both student learning and the teaching experience.
- While some faculty would have liked more connection with external partners, this was more challenging during the pandemic.
- Project models can be enhanced when expectations are clear at the outset of the course design process.
- Instructors expressed their appreciation for the support received from CWP coordinators and for the partnerships developed for their students.

## Survey Highlights

15 responses

41 Instructors in Brantford & Waterloo

86% felt EL component enhanced student learning

93% felt EL experiences aligned with course goals

*"The Community and Workplace Partnerships team provide pedagogical and practical support and coordination with [partners] to bring these meaningful learning opportunities to life in my course."*

*"During a semester when a great deal of student learning was asynchronous, CSL provided a wonderful opportunity for students to engage course material in a more direct and engaged manner."*

# WHAT PARTNERS ARE SAYING

Our partners have done an incredible job of welcoming students and engaging with them in new ways during the last year.

- They describe Laurier students as professional, knowledgeable, mature, enthusiastic and hard working.
- Partners appreciated the new perspective and ideas provided by students, along with their flexibility.
- Some mentioned being able to expand their services or complete tasks that otherwise would not have been possible, while others emphasized the valuable solutions that students were able to contribute and the positive impact students had overall on their organization and/or community.

## Survey Highlights

64 responses | 450+ Partner Organizations

94% had a positive overall experience with CWP

99% would offer EL opportunities in the future

94% felt partnership helped organization meet some of its needs

*"We are at a time when we need to re- envision how we provide supports and services in the future and your students are providing valuable input into what our potential could be."*

*"Connecting virtually with students during the pandemic has been so beneficial to our program and participants. They have created and facilitated some wonderful programs. We are always impressed with how mature and wonderful the Laurier students have been. We are so thankful for this connection!"*

# WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING

## Community-Service Learning - Evaluation Highlights

1250 students

92% had a positive overall experience

86% would recommend CSL to future student

94% felt the experience contributed to their learning/growth

## Workplace Partnerships - Evaluation Highlights

985 students

95% had a positive overall experience

91% would recommend WP to future student

96% felt the experience contributed to their learning/growth

Students in courses with a Workplace Partnerships (WP) component completed in-course project, internship, or job shadow experiences. Depending on the course, Community-Service Learning (CSL) students participated in a weekly placement or completed a project for a community partner.

- Respondents overwhelmingly noted that their experiences connected well to course concepts, provided hands-on or real world experience, and offered them opportunities to gain new skills and knowledge that will prepare them for future careers.
- Analytical abilities, research, and problem-solving were commonly reported skills that students felt they developed.
- Students appreciated the opportunity to connect and interact with others, discover new interests, and learn about resources in the community.
- CSL students commented on how the experience opened their eyes to community or social issues.
- Many students working on projects for an industry partner liked being accountable to that partner and having the responsibility of producing something of value for them.
- Students in all types, but particularly those who completed placements, appreciated the support and encouragement of their supervisors.
- Students understand that the pandemic did impact their experience and suggest ensuring more contact with partners and in-person activities when restrictions allow for this.
- More in-class discussions about the EL component, clear expectations and examples for project-based models, and dedicating more time to the experience were other suggestions that students offered.

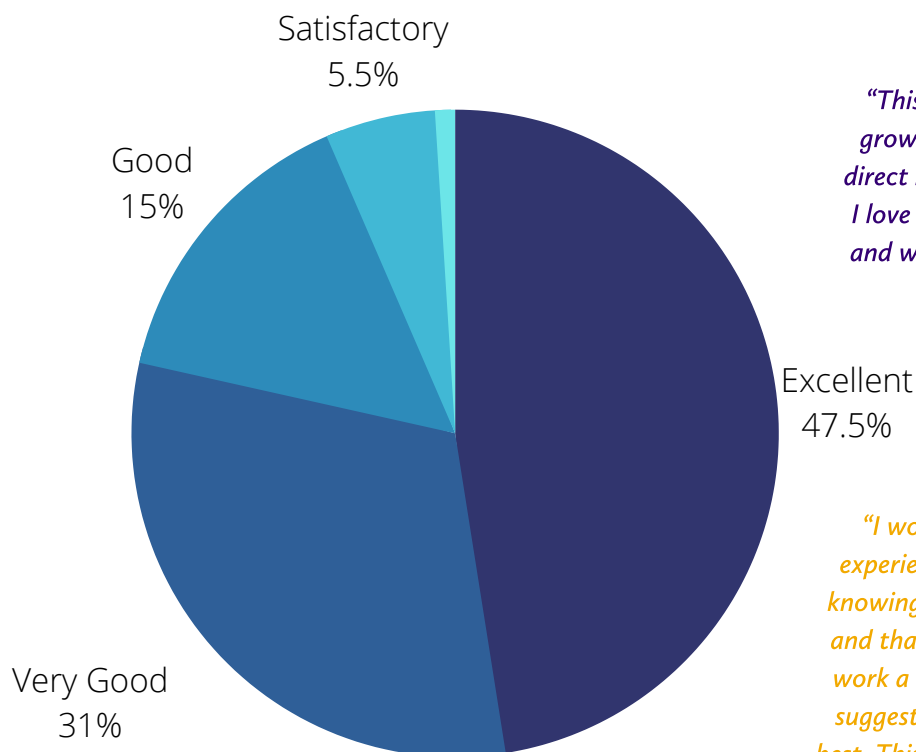
*"I believe the CSL placement is an amazing opportunity for any student, by choosing to do a placement surrounding younger children, I was able to further think about my future goals and further my interest in working with children in the future. Overall, it was a great way to connect with my community and expand on my interests that will benefit me in the long-term."*

*"This course taught me about professionalism. It also taught me the importance of community engagement and how to facilitate that in a virtual world. I was able to gain a plethora of new skills that enhanced my personal growth and professional development."*

*"I would recommend this activity to all students joining the Laurier community because it gives them a sense of belonging. I used to think I would just be a visible minority walking in the shadows of my peers, but this class taught me to embrace my ethnicity and appreciate other individuals as well."*

*"You are able to make great connections with supervisors, get experience for your resume, and discover your likes and dislikes about this area of work."*

# STUDENT RATING OF OVERALL EXPERIENCE: ALL TYPES



*"This experience contributed to my personal growth because it helped me decide where to direct my career pathway. I quickly learned that I love working with individuals with disabilities and would be very interested in a career within this field."*

*"I would recommend this because the overall experience was really fun and taught me a lot. In knowing that our article was going to be published and that we would be on the radio, we did tend to work a little harder and give each other very good suggestions to improve our project to make it the best. This aspect also motivates you to put your time and efforts into meetings and class to understand every aspect of the project to make the result very good."*

*"Overall, I thought this was a great experience. Working with real organizations is always enjoyable for me as it provides opportunities to apply our learnings in a practical manner, helping a company that is truly facing a problem. I always feel I am more engaged when there is a real company involved, rather than just reading something from a hypothetical or outdated case study"*

*"I would recommend this experience to a future student because it gives you the opportunity to apply what you are learning in class to a real-life situation. Also, presenting to a real company and its employees allows you to feel a little bit more pressure and lights a fire under the students to do well!"*



WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

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Visit our [website](#)

*"Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of **experience**."*

*-Kolb*

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*Inspiring Lives.*