

Practical Education Programs and Development of Sporting Professions in University

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Abstract

Established 1911, Wilfrid Laurier became a provincially assisted university in 1973 with 2,300 students enrolled. Today there are 13,000 students within faculties of arts, science, music, business, social work, and education. Laurier is popular with students, in part because of its co-op programs. Beginning in 1978, Laurier offered Canada's first English-speaking business co-op program. Today, with more than 1,000 undergraduate co-op students enrolled at anytime, it is Canada's largest business co-op program. Co-op programs in Arts and Science were first offered at Laurier in 1980; Kinesiology and Physical Education students became eligible for work terms beginning in 1998. Enrollment is limited and admission is competitive. Successful applicants undergo a comprehensive student preparation program before applying for jobs. They complete two work terms which are scheduled during the summer after their second and third year. Work terms provide an opportunity for students to integrate their studies with practical experience, gain marketable skills, develop contacts, and clarify their career goals. Typically, 35% of Arts and Science Co-op students are hired by government, 35% work in the private sector, and 30% are employed by non-profit organizations. More than 100 work term positions have been held by Kinesiology students since the first students were employed in 1998. Forty-three percent have been employed in camp and recreation program positions, while 13% have held positions in clinics. The remaining 43% has been hired in diverse areas such as research, personal training, seniors programs, and sports co-ordination. Seven other universities in Canada offer co-op programs in Kinesiology and Physical Education. Most provide at least three work terms within a three-semester system. Co-op is promoted to employers as a cost-effective way to meet their short-term hiring needs and evaluate potential full-time staff. They choose Laurier because of its strong academic programs, the quality of its students and its commitment to personal, responsive service.