

THEY SAID IT WOULDN'T WORK (A HISTORY OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION IN CANADA)

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Prologue — The Early Years

In the mid 1950's admission to post-secondary academic institutions in Canada started to grow at a rapid rate. The technological revolution was underway. Universities and colleges throughout North America and the rest of the world were playing catch-up to the scientific advances in Russia which had sent the first satellite into orbit.

The community of Kitchener-Waterloo in Ontario, 65 miles west of Toronto, was a diverse manufacturing, business and insurance community. There was a small Lutheran liberal arts college located in the city of Waterloo providing the only post-secondary education for a large and growing region. A number of local businessmen had a vision that a technologically oriented university was needed. Many of these businessmen had been transferred from head offices in the U.S.A. to subsidiary companies in the area and they were familiar with cooperative education as then practiced in the U.S.A. The idea was attractive to them as the best way to serve the growing science and technology needs of the community and, indeed, the country.

This group of businessmen did some investigating and decided to found an institution with an engineering program based on the concept of cooperative education. Once the decision was made little time was wasted, and by July 1957, 75 co-op students were admitted to a new institution which would later become the University of Waterloo.

The founders were immediately visited by delegations from nearby institutions who came not to praise them and find out more about what they

were doing, but to criticize their efforts. They were told cooperative education would sully the academic program; the comfortable academic year system would require dramatic change and,; the economy would not support such a venture. The uniform message espoused by these academicians was "it wouldn't work."

Meanwhile, employers of co-op students judged co-op programs to be a success. Students were well received and given practical and challenging learning situations during their work terms. Supervisors of students became aware they had a unique opportunity to be a part of the educational process of future leaders of Canadian industry and business.

Growth and Expansion

Further proof of the value of cooperative education came when other institutions in Canada began to emulate the program at Waterloo. The first of these institutions was the Universite de Sherbrooke in Quebec which initiated a program in 1964. Soon thereafter co-op programs were begun at Memorial University in Newfoundland, the University of Regina in Saskatchewan and the Nova Scotia Technical College — all with work term sequences modeled after those at the University of Waterloo. By 1969 and 1970 Mohawk and Fanshawe Colleges of Applied Arts & Technology in Ontario adopted this format for their technological programs. With the addition of cooperative education at the University of Victoria in British Columbia in 1976 the movement had spread from coast to coast in Canada. Now 60 institutions (26 universities and 34 colleges) offer cooperative education to approximately 27,000 students in 243 programs across 87 disciplines. (see Table I).

The initial group of employers of co-op students in Canada were generally spearheaded by individuals who had experience either with the sandwich education program in Britain or with co-op programs in the United States. As the benefits of this type of education became known and referrals were made by current co-op employers, more employers became interested in participating. In 1987 over 3,000 organizations employed co-op students from the 60 Canadian institutions. It is interesting to note that 30 of the firms who participated with the initial Waterloo co-op work term are still participating today.

Co-op students work in all regions of the country; they are not limited to working in the geographical area where they study. Although there is some cooperation among co-op practitioners, each college and university maintains responsibility for developing and monitoring their own student placements.

One of the major benefits for co-op employers in Canada is the standard work term of four months which has been adopted by virtually every institution. This has allowed employers to interchange students from one institution for those of another. It has also assisted them in having a common training format

which can include students from more than one institution.

Support for cooperative education among employers in Canada is found in all sectors of the economy. Approximately 75% of all co-op placements are in the private sector with the remainder represented by federal, provincial and municipal governments as well as the various government and social agencies. It is estimated that fewer than 50 organizations employ more than 10 students at one time. Although this requires considerably more attention by co-op practitioners, it provides co-op students with a broad employer base.

Canadian Association for Cooperative Education (CAFCE)

Paralleling events in the United States, a professional organization evolved many years after the introduction of cooperative education in Canada. On September 26, 1973, 29 representatives from 15 institutions met at McMaster University and Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario, to form the Canadian Association for Cooperative Education/Association Canadienne de l'Enseignement Cooperatif. This association represents cooperative education at the post-secondary level of education in Canada.

Membership currently stands at 384: 70 employer members, 290 education members and 24 other members. Included are two honorary members; Dr. A.S. (Bert) Barber (retired, University of Waterloo) and George Miller (retired, University of South Florida). Membership ranges from presidents of organizations, to international representatives and human resources professionals, to neophyte recruiters, co-op coordinators and persons interested in cooperative education.

There were no employers at the initial meeting. This was not because they were not valued but because the educational co-op professionals felt they should get their own act together before involving employers. In 1977 members of the fledgling organization redefined cooperative education and reformulated their constitution to create the Cooperative Education Council of Canada. Only then were employers actively encouraged to join and they are now an equal and integral part of the Association.

Since 1974 the Association has organized 13 annual conferences following a pattern alternating between various sites in Canada. Because the density of population is relatively low and distance is relatively high, constant concern has been expressed about the potential for low turnouts at these conferences. Quite the opposite has happened! These conferences are valued and usually 50% of the members attend.

The Association publishes the *CAFCE News* to help members keep in touch with one another. Also, regional organizations are now being encouraged. It is hoped that more members within a region will be able to travel shorter distances more frequently to benefit from, and contribute to, the professional

development of the membership. For example, the British Columbia Region and the Community College Group in Ontario have each been meeting regularly.

It is ironic that to date there has been very little formal recognition of co-op students in these organizations. Most institutions do have good internal mechanisms for communicating between students and administration but it seems to stop there.

CAFCE has had very close links with CEA, Inc. In fact, Bert Barber from the University of Waterloo was charter member number one of CEA; he paid his membership with a then brand-new Canadian two dollar bill! For the past several years there has been an exchange of officers at our respective annual conferences. A Canadian has been elected as the International Regional Representative on the CEA, Inc. Board for several years. The first annual conference which CEA, Inc. held outside the United States was held in Toronto, Ontario in March 1983. Further, two Canadians have won the prestigious Dean Herman Schneider and Charles F. Kettering Awards — Ray Wieser, University of Waterloo, and Roy Sadler, IBM Canada, respectively.

Cooperative Education Council of Canada (CECOC)

The Cooperative Education Council of Canada was created in 1977 as a body of CAFCE to help regulate the quality of co-op programs and to accredit those programs which meet specific criteria. The leaders of cooperative education felt this would discourage some programs from coming on-stream which did not comply with the definition of co-op.

To be accredited by CECOC, programs must conform to the specific definition of co-op and demonstrate conformity to 16 mandatory criteria. Formal application for accreditation is made by the institution after which an accreditation team, comprising professional educators (administrators and faculty) and employers, reviews the application. If granted approval, accreditation is normally for six years. Programs which receive accreditation are noted in the annual directory.

Other Associations

There are other associations important to those involved in cooperative education. Canadians were founding members of the World Assembly on Cooperative Education and have been active presenters at each of the World Conferences. Canadians are also founding members of the World Council.

Through its members CAFCE recognizes the value of constructive work incorporated into regular academic curricula at all levels of education and supports the efforts of the Cooperative Career and Work Education Association of Canada (CCWEA) and the Ontario High School Cooperative Education Association

(OCEA). Although the original intention of high school co-op programs was to assist students in acquiring basic job skills, many students from high school co-op programs, as a direct result of their co-op experiences, are motivated to seek further education. Naturally, many of these students are opting for a co-op program at college or university.

Relationship with Government

The training and preparation of co-op students to enter the work force and the acceptance of cooperative education by employers has been so successful that the Canadian Federal Government has become a leader in encouraging growth and development of cooperative education in Canada. CAFCE has worked closely with the Government to establish a funding scheme for startup costs of new co-op programs at existing or new co-op institutions. The Government also helped to establish a National Executive Office for CAFCE located in Toronto.

Future

At one time co-op practitioners in Canada predicted little growth. However, as more institutions embraced the co-op concept, more students enrolled and more field coordinators were hired, co-op institutions grew beyond the expectations of most. From one in 1957, the number grew to 15 in 1977 and 60 in 1987. Currently there are over 27,000 students studying in the co-op system, double the number of students in 1978.

As the population ages and retires and as replacements are required, it is predicted by some that competition for a declining number of graduates will increase and that cooperative education will become even more popular. Continued growth is anticipated.

Epilogue

It should be noted that one of the academic detractors of cooperative education back in 1957 when the University of Waterloo was just getting underway made a special effort to revisit Bert Barber in 1967 to congratulate and commend the University for its initiative and success.

Incidentally, those original 75 students in 1957 have grown to over 9,000 in 1987 — the second largest co-op program in the world. Who said it wouldn't work?

Table I

List of Institutions Offering Cooperative Education Programs
(as known to CAFCE, February, 1987)

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Year of Start Up</u>	<u>Approximate Co-op Enrollment</u>
Acadia University	1982	60
Algonquin College	1979	100
Assiniboine Community College	1987	0
British Columbia Institute of Technology	1984	55
Brock University	1979	30
Cambrian College	1986	80
Centennial College	1986	64
College of New Caledonia	1982	75
Concordia University	1981	200
Confederation College	1978	20
Dalhousie University	1980	23
Dawson College	1974	200
De Vry Institute of Technology	1987	0
Douglas College	1986	40
Durham College	1987	0
Fanshawe College	1970	2052
George Brown College	1985	15
Georgian College	1968	1357
Humber College	1979	249
Institut de Marine de Rimouski	1981	350
Lambton College	1975	420
Lethbridge Community College	1985	25
McMaster University	1971	77
Memorial University	1968	1110
Mohawk College	1969	2700
Mount Royal College	1985	50
Mount Saint Vincent University	1979	200
Niagara College	1977	300
Okanagan College	1986	15
Red River Community College	1978	163
St. Lawrence College	1981	125
Saint Mary's University	1981	5
Saskatchewan Technical Institute	1984	191

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Year of Start Up</u>	<u>Approximate Co-op Enrollment</u>
Sault College	1982	64
Selkirk College	1985	20
Seneca College	1972	896
Sheridan College	1985	70
Simon Fraser University	1975	621
Sir Sanford Fleming College	1986	20
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology	1986	12
Technical University of Nova Scotia	1979	226
Universite' de Sherbrooke	1964	2100
Universite' du Quebec, E'cole de Technologie Sup'erieure	1974	1025
University College of Cape Breton	1981	77
University of Alberta	1981	467
University of British Columbia	1978	150
University of Guelph	1981	258
University of Lethbridge	1971	140
University of Manitoba	1982	81
University of New Brunswick	1981	100
University of Ottawa	1980	347
University of Regina	1969	216
University of Toronto	1975	159
University of Victoria	1976	690
University of Waterloo	1957	9111
University of Western Ontario	1979	50
University of Windsor	1986	13
Vancouver Community College	1981	45
Wilfrid Laurier University	1975	376
Westerra Institute of Technology	1984	24