



# Strengthening the Foundations

Modernizing career services and WIL in a decentralized institution



# Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and thank the T'kemplúps te Secwépemc for allowing us to be guests on this land.

We also thank the Snuneymuxw, Quw'utsun and Tla'amin, on whose traditional lands we teach, learn, research, live and share knowledge.





- 01** Introduction
- 02** The challenge
- 03** The opportunity
- 04** Looking ahead
- 05** Questions & reflections

# Meet the team

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# Snapshot of VIU

- 12,644 students
- 11% international
- 13% indigenous
- 3 campuses
- Special-purpose teaching institution
- Adult basic education to graduate studies
- 100 + programs



# Centre for Experiential Learning and Student Engagement

## Career Studio

- Career services
- Employer relationships & events
- Work-integrated learning admin & funding support
- System administration

## Student Engagement

- Co-curricular learning & engagement
- Thrive wellness
- Culture Connections & Peer Mentorship
- RockVIU- new student orientation





02

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## The challenge



# The landscape

2021-2023

- Leadership transition
- Consultant report
- Deficit mitigation plan
- International student policy change
- Lack of governance structure to support WIL



# Career services

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## Waves along the way

- Decentralized and limited career services and data
- Fractured trust with colleagues impacted by changes
- Small cohort programs
- Minimal staffing resources, no central space
- Big shifts in the labour market, technology and political landscapes



# Employer engagement

## Rocky points

- Decentralized employer funnel, tracking, and engagement
- Faculty protectiveness of employers and past politics
- Employer awareness of WIL and funding opportunities
- Students finding meaningful WIL opportunities and employment



# Work-integrated learning

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## What is WIL again?

- Limited data on WIL across the institution
- Restructure of WIL from partially centralized to decentralized
- Limited to no collaboration across departments
- No centralized resources, professional development on WIL
- Policy gaps
- Equity and access disparities across programs

# Breakout session - your context and challenges

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In groups of **two**, 20-minutes to discuss:

- Your career & WIL context
- What is your biggest challenge around career and WIL? (E.x. systems, structures, implementation)





# Stop

What do we need to build, try, or prioritize?

# Start

What is no longer serving students or us?

# Continue

What is working and worth protecting?



**03**

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## **The opportunity**



# A new era

- COWIL grant
- Building the Career Studio
- Restructure of CEL



# Career Studio goals



**Goal 1:** Assist all students in building a career readiness foundation from which to demonstrate core competencies for success in the workplace and lifelong career management

**Goal 2:** Connect students to employers, alumni, and community organizations through work-integrated learning (WIL) and experiential learning opportunities and organized on-campus and off-campus networking events.

**Goal 3:** Grow to be VIU's hub for diverse, equitable and inclusive career services support for all students, alumni, faculty, staff, employers, and community partners.

**Goal 4:** Serve as a resource and support hub for work-integrated learning and experiential learning at VIU

# Career services

## From COWIL to now

- Launched Career Studio physical space and virtual hub
- In-Studio individual appointments and Career Studio on the Road workshops
- CCDP and Career Peer Facilitator staffing
- Launched Career Closet & Career Closet on the Road
- Shq'apthut-based career counselling



# Employer engagement

## Building the foundation

- Formalizing relationships and events
- Labour market round tables, panels, career stories, etc.
- Campus wide initiatives like career fairs and networking events
- Connecting employers with the appropriate faculties
- Centralized data



# Work-integrated learning

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## Herding the cats

- WIL inventory and Experience Hub
- Community of Practice and Staff/faculty hub
- WIL and health and safety checklists
- Health and safety trainings
- CEWIL ihub central administration
- VIU WIL awards
- WIL contracts (with legal counsel)



# What we learned about WIL data

Fall 2025

**14**

Courses offering WIL

**745**

Students  
undertaking WIL

Interession 2025

**49**

Courses offering WIL

**1135**

Students  
undertaking WIL

Spring 2025

**68**

Courses offering WIL

**1,600**

Students  
undertaking WIL

# Breakout session - what's your need and/or offer?

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In groups of **five** (20-minutes):

1. Write down and discuss your need
2. Group share in small groups
3. Write down something you can offer to another person in this room?





04

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## Looking ahead



# Career services

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## Looking ahead

- Career services roadmap
- Career Closet on the Road permanent placements in Academic and Career Prep, Culture Couch, Shq'apthut.
- AI policy, training & prompt library development
- Senior Career Peer position & training
- Deepen internal & external partnerships

# Employer engagement

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## Looking ahead

- Increasing on and off campus collaborations and events with faculties and employers
- Revamping career webpage for more straight forward navigation and accessing important information
- Develop a new employer engagement strategies and goals



# Work-integrated learning

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## Looking ahead

- Promotion and outreach to faculties
- WIL tagging project through SRS
- WIL policy (risk management, checklists)
- Asynchronous WIL prep workshop
- Governance related to WIL course development
- Faculty-wide WIL courses



**Questions**

and/or

**Reflections**

