



SUPPORTING WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS *from* INTERNATIONAL PATHWAYS

Report *with* Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

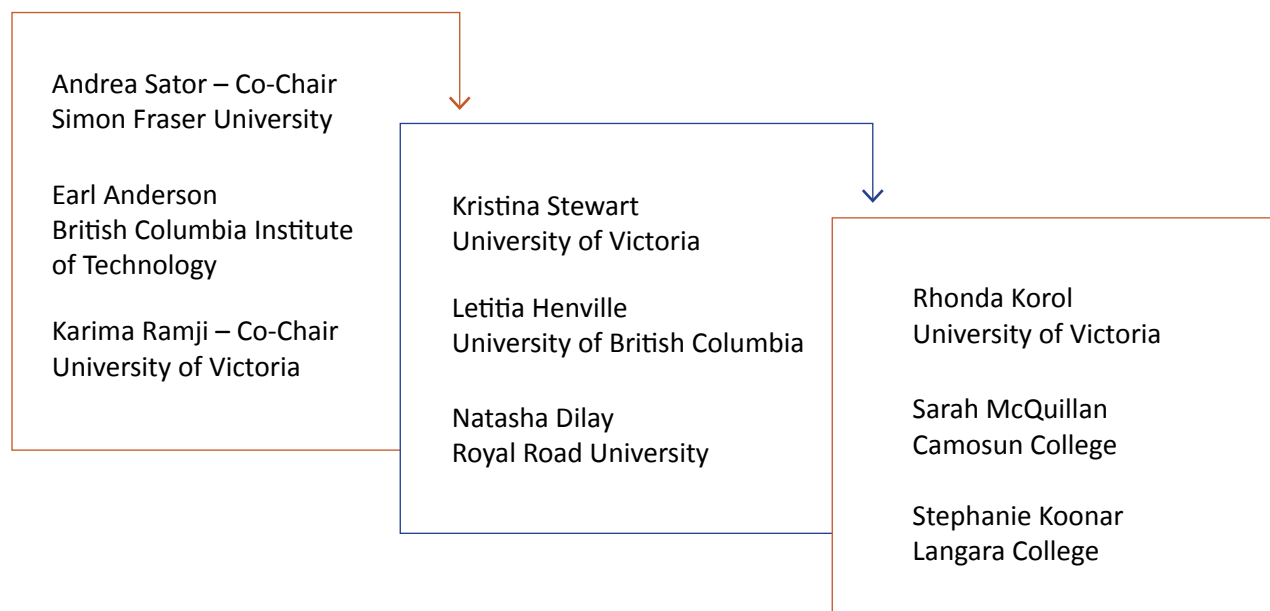
This report and the *Support Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit* included in Appendix I is intended to assist employers and hiring managers in attracting, hiring and onboarding Students from International Pathways (SFIP).

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The ACE-WIL Research Committee was an integral part of making this work happen (in alphabetical order below).

THE ACE-WIL RESEARCH COMMITTEE IS COMPRISED OF:



A special thanks to Shadab Shah, the primary research investigator on this project, whose work has informed the development of this report and the D&I toolkit.

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KEY TERMS

Association for Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (ACE-WIL) for British Columbia (B.C.) and Yukon (ACE-WIL B.C. / Yukon) is a non-profit comprised of post-secondary and publicly funded institutions in the province. ACE-WIL aims to promote excellence in post-secondary experiential education through advancing WIL opportunities for students.

Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL Canada) is the lead organization for work-integrated learning in Canada. CEWIL Canada's mission is to build the capacity to develop future-ready students and graduates through quality work-integrated learning.

Onboarding refers to the activities involved in transferring workplace knowledge and skills to the WIL student to add value to their experience as well as to the benefit of the business/company.

Post-secondary institutions in Canada include universities, colleges and institutes and private and public institutions. A post-secondary education usually refers to having a diploma, certification and/or an academic degree.

Students from International Pathways (SFIP) includes learners at Canadian post-secondary institutions who may have come to Canada through various immigration pathways.

SFIP may be foreign nationals on a study visa, refugees, new immigrants, or permanent residents who immigrated to Canada before starting their post-secondary education.

Social capital refers to positive outcomes as a result of the human interaction that is developed and encourages connections, which is built on trust, respect and commitment among employees. These personal relationships and networks contribute to a business/organization's success.¹

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is a term used to refer to educational approaches that formally integrate a student's academic studies with experiences within an authentic workplace or practice setting.

WIL experiences include an engaged partnership of at least an academic institution, and host organization and a student. WIL can occur at the course or program level and the development of student-focused learning objectives, outcomes related to personal agency, knowledge and skill mobility and life-long learning.²

¹ Novkov, A. (2019, April 1). Successful Organization: Run on Social Capital. Kanbanize
<https://kanbanize.com/blog/successful-organizations-run-on-social-capital/>

² CEWIL Canada (2021). What is WIL? Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Definitions.
<https://www.cewilcanada.ca/CEWIL/About%20Us/Work-Integrated-Learning/CEWIL/About-Us/Work-Integrated-Learning.aspx?hkey=ed772be2-00d0-46cd-a5b8-873000a18b41>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“ *International students bring so much to Canada, contributing over \$21 billion annually to our economy and supporting the vitality of our communities.* ³ ”

Work-integrated Learning (WIL) programs, including co-operative education, are designed to bridge international students’ academic studies with work experience for securing relevant employment. A study was conducted in 2015 to explore “Employer’s Perspectives about Hiring Students from International Pathways.” A main finding was that employers required increased awareness of the benefits of hiring SFIP and desire to achieve greater diversity in their workplace.

This research was launched in February 2020 to explore *what tools, resources, and frameworks are required by B.C. employers to facilitate the effective attraction, hiring, and onboarding of students from international pathways (SFIP)?* A mixed methodology was used to get deeper insight into employers’ challenges when hiring and onboarding SFIP and thus, uncover approaches and tools for increasing SFIP employment outcomes.

This report presents the findings related to employers’ challenges as well as opportunities for addressing them. The report then outlines recommendations for promoting greater SFIP employment outcomes (see below summary of findings and recommendations).

FINDINGS

SFIP low levels of employment skills & competencies.

Lack of wage subsidies and immigration uncertainty.

Additional support needed from post-secondary institutions.

Limited steps by employers to attract, hire or onboard SFIP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Greater efforts by SFIP to increase preparedness.

Increased support from post-secondary for SFIP and employers.

Larger efforts by employers to hire, onboard and retain SFIP.

Further research on wage subsidies, diversity and inclusion (i.e., gender, race, class, ethnicity, etc.) and inclusive practices.

Finally, this report includes the “Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit” developed from the research findings and request from employers for resources to promote diversity in their work-integrated learning (WIL) hiring process (see toolkit in Appendix I).

³ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2021, January 8). *Government of Canada announces new policy to help former international students live in, work in and continue contributing to Canada*. Cision. www.newswire.ca/news-releases/government-of-canada-announces-new-policy-to-help-former-international-students-live-in-work-in-and-continue-contributing-to-canada-883297790.html

1. INTRODUCTION

“B.C. is expected to have 861,000 job openings between 2019 and 2029. Over three-quarters of these job openings will require some form of post-secondary education and training.”⁴

Students from International Pathways (SFIP) bring diverse global perspectives to Canadian post-secondary institutions, civil society, economy and labour market. Work-integrated Learning (WIL), including co-operative education is an important partnership between an academic institution, a host business/organization and students for securing relevant employment. Yet, between 2006 and 2017 after graduation, 9.7% of university-educated immigrants were unemployed compared to 2.9% of Canadian-born graduates.⁵

To find out why, a study was conducted in 2015 to explore “Employer’s Perspectives about Hiring Students from International Pathways.” A main finding was employers required increased awareness of the benefits of hiring SFIP and desire to achieve greater diversity in their workplace.

This research was launched in February 2020 to build on the 2015 study findings to better understand employers’ perspectives and experiences when attracting, hiring and onboarding SFIP by exploring the question:

What tools, resources and frameworks are required by B.C. employers to facilitate the effective **attraction, hiring and onboarding** of students from international pathways?

The mixed methodological approach (literature review and document analysis, an online survey and interviews) used in this research resulted in four key findings: (1) SFIP lack of Canadian employment competencies, (2) government barriers, (3) lack of support from post-secondary institutions and (4) employers’ lack of specific steps to hire and onboard SFIP.

The research findings also revealed opportunities for increasing SFIP employment outcomes: (1) increase efforts by SFIP, (2) scaling up of ACE-WIL and CEWIL programs, advocacy for wage subsidies, more resources for employers and (3) greater efforts by employers to integrate Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) practices for hiring and onboarding of SFIP.

While there were some limitations in the research (lack of publicly available data/metrics and low response rate to the survey and interviews), it highlighted unique areas for further research, namely: wage subsidies, gap between the value employers placed on SFIP and specific actions taken, as well as a deeper analysis of D&I beyond the SFIP lens (i.e., gender identity, race, ethnicity, age, etc.).

The primary outcome of this research has been the creation of a practical D&I toolkit which was developed from the invaluable input of employers and hiring managers who participated in the research. The six tools included in the toolkit are designed to assist employers with promoting greater SFIP employment outcomes through WIL opportunities (see Appendix I).

⁴ WorkBC. (2019). B.C.’s Labour Market Outlook: 2019 Edition.
www.workbc.ca/labour-market-industry/labour-market-outlook.aspx

⁵ Statistics Canada. (2018). *The Canadian immigrant labour market: Recent trends from 2006 to 2017*.
www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-606-x/71-606-x2018001-eng.htm

2. METHODOLOGY

What tools, resources and frameworks are required by B.C. employers to facilitate the effective attraction, hiring, and onboarding of students from international pathways?

A mix methodological framework was used to answer the research question consisting of a literature review and document analysis, online survey and semi-structured interviews.

2.1. Literature review and document analysis

A literature review and document analysis were conducted on 48 articles, academic papers, employers' websites, government sources and contemporary scholarships. The objectives were to analyze and evaluate whether or not employers hired SFIP through WIL opportunities, get a better understanding of challenges and experiences and identify avenues for increasing SFIP employment outcomes.

The document selection criteria were based on the reputability of the data and recent comparative global studies on policies and practices related to work-integrated learning. The five broad findings that emerged from the analysis of 48 documents include:

1. Low levels and/or lack of Canadian employment skills and competencies of SFIP (soft skills and work experience).
2. Main hiring challenges experienced by employers (e.g., wage subsidies, immigration uncertainty and complicated work-permit processes).
3. Employers' lack of awareness of the benefits of hiring SFIP.
4. Types of employers who are successful at recruiting, onboarding and retaining SFIP.
5. Existing resources available to facilitate SFIP recruitment (e.g., employers experiences using anonymous resumes).

2.2. Online survey

An online survey was added as a second step and distributed to 58 staff and hiring managers of small-sized (1-99 employees), medium (50-499 employees) and large (500+ employees) businesses/companies across B.C., Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. Out of the 58 surveys distributed, 14 responses were received. The objective of the online survey was to provide a deeper understanding of:

- Employers' perceptions and challenges when attracting, hiring and onboarding SFIP.
- Whether or not the employers would provide SFIP with future opportunities.
- Specific hiring and/or onboarding practices for integrating WIL students.
- Methods and approaches used to track student metrics/data.⁶
- Types of support needed for better SFIP employment outcomes.

The survey revealed similar findings from the literature review and document analysis but highlighted additional challenges. Further challenges identified were wage subsidies and immigration uncertainties, employers' lack of specific steps for hiring and onboarding SFIP and a lack of in-house expertise in human resources to navigate complicated work permit processes.

⁶ SFIP metrics include, tracking of SFIP successes, the number of SFIP hired through WIL opportunities and full-time employment retention rates.

2.3. Semi-structured interviews

A third step was implemented to enrich the data from the document analysis and online survey. Semi-structured interviews were requested with eight employers, seven were conducted—a 88 percent response rate. The seven interviews consisted of employers and hiring managers from two small (1-99 employees), one medium (50-499 employees), and four large size (500+ employees) businesses.

The interviews were structured around the survey for consistency with the data analysis, but also contained open-ended questions to delve deeper into employers' perceptions and experiences when attracting, hiring and onboarding SFIP.

The interviews verified the findings from the document analysis and survey (e.g., low levels of SFIP competencies, wage subsidies, immigration uncertainty and employers' lack of specific hiring and onboarding practices). It also provided insight into employers' willingness to promote diversity in their workplace and suggestions for SFIP.

It also revealed employers' need for greater support from government and post-secondary institutions (ACE-WIL, CEWIL and career offices) to promote and improve SFIP employment outcomes.

2.4. Limitations

Some limitations of this research include the lack of publicly available data/metrics from government ministries, post-secondary institutions and employers regarding the exact number of SFIP in Canada. Government databases for instance, do not capture specific international status for SFIP—new immigrants, refugees or permanent residents. Without a larger data set, it was not possible to get a more robust and in-depth analysis of the composition of SFIP.

The low survey and interview response rate of 32 percent (21 of 66 employers contacted) presented another limitation. Out of the 58 surveys distributed and 8 employers contacted for interviews across B.C., Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, only 21 responded (14 survey responses and seven interviews conducted). Out of the 21 responses, there was a provincial bias toward employers in B.C., 62 per cent (13 of 21). Alberta, 19% (four of 21), the remaining 19% (four of 21) represented Ontario and Quebec.

A further bias was toward certain sectors (technology) over others such as government ministries. Out of the 81% (17 of 21) of respondents from B.C. and Alberta, 42% (nine of 21) were from the technology sector. The next sector represented was the construction industry with 14% (three of 21). The remaining 43% (nine respondents) were from engineering, consumer packaged goods, education, finance and insurance, information and cultural, professional services and utilities.

A larger survey and interview response rate would have offered greater data validation as well as generated more diverse approaches/practices, opportunities and best practices for increasing SFIP employment outcomes.

Given the overall methodological framework however, the findings in this report provide rationale for the recommendations and creation of a unique D&I toolkit developed as a practical resource for employers and hiring managers.

3. FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

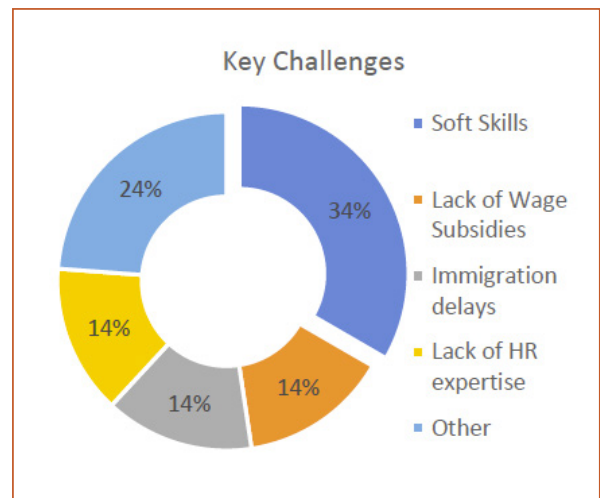
The overall findings from the mixed methodological framework revealed four key areas for addressing SFIP employment outcomes and promoting greater diversity in the workplace.

3.1. Students from International Pathways (SFIP)

One of the key findings identified in the literature review and confirmed by 34% (seven of 21) of survey and interview respondents, were low levels and/or lack of SFIP Canadian employment competencies, including:

Soft skills

- *More efficient communication skills*, such as written/spoken English or French and ability to communicate in a professional setting.
- *Increased social capital*, including being a team player and having a strong cultural or organizational fit.
- *Improved Interpersonal skills* for working in multicultural teams.
- *Stronger understanding of Canadian industry* specific terms and workplace culture.
- *Greater ability to articulate* their point of view with clients and staff.



In addition to soft skills, 28% (two of seven) of those who were interviewed, recommended SFIP acquire more work experience before starting their placements.

Work experience

- *Increase volunteering* experience in local communities.
- *Develop mentors* through professional development opportunities (e.g., Toastmasters).
- *Improve proactive job searches*.
- *Customize resumes* to position qualifications/description and develop targeted cover letters.
- *Build self-confidence* of their international work experience.
- *Cultivate intercultural skills* to ensure "workplace ready."

While employers suggested SFIP should gain more soft skills and work experience, they recognized the benefits SFIP bring to the workplace (discussed in the "Employers" section).

3.2. Government barriers

Of the nineteen employers and hiring manager who answered the question regarding SFIP as future employers, 84% (16 of 19) said yes. However, the respondents also noted the lack of government wage subsidies and immigration uncertainties (delays and complicated processes) with work permits impacted their decision to hire and onboard international students.

Wage subsidies

A unique finding from the survey and interviews was the lack of wage subsidies as a barrier to SFIP employment outcomes. Federal and Provincial governments provide wage subsidies for SFIP categorized as refugees and new immigrants, but limited subsidies for those on study permits. This wage subsidy gap could be one explanation for low levels of WIL opportunities available to SFIP on study permits. An example of the magnitude of this problem is:

Between 2017 and 2018, there were 296,469 SFIP on study permits enrolled in Canadian post-secondary institutions who were (largely) not eligible for wage subsidies for WIL opportunities.⁷

Wage subsidies were noted by 14% (three of 21) of respondents as a deterrent when considering hiring and onboarding SFIP on study permits. Although the number of respondents was relatively low in this study, it raises an ethical question about the lack of wage subsidies for SFIP on work permits and their large contributions to Canada's diversity and economy.

Delays, immigration uncertainty and complicated processes

Corresponding to the findings from the document analysis, another barrier noted by 14% (three of 21) of respondents was immigration uncertainties (e.g., work permit delays, requirements, lengthy and complicated processes, and legal status uncertainty) as reasons for not considering SFIP. This means that:

While employers view WIL students as future employees, they also shy away from hiring SFIP into WIL positions in anticipation of possible work permit complexities and challenges after graduation.

⁷ Statistics Canada. (2020, February 19). *Canadian postsecondary enrolments and graduates, 2017/2018*. www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200219/dq200219b-eng.htm

3.3. Post-secondary institutions

A study conducted in 2018 with 14,228 post-secondary international students indicated that:

“ 60% of all respondents indicated their intention to apply for permanent resident status in Canada in the future ... [t]his is a marked jump from the 51% of respondents who indicated this intention in 2015.⁸ ”

Support for employers

In addition to employers' recommendation that SFIP develop greater employment skills, employers require greater support from post-secondary institutions, ACE-WIL and CEWIL and career offices to recruit, hire and onboard SFIP.

Out of the survey and interviews, 19% (four of 21) noted post-secondary institution should:

- *Provide clearer articulation* of the benefits of hiring SFIP.
- *Develop deeper outreach and connections* with hiring managers to uncover hiring opportunities and position SFIP as solution providers.
- *Improve SFIP employment competencies*—professional development opportunities to enhance communication, public speaking, networking and leadership skills.

Of the research participants, 19% (four of 21) said post-secondary WIL and career offices should provide employer recruitment teams with tools to address SFIP hiring challenges, such as improving communication and promotion of the benefits of SFIP, help them to navigate immigration requirements and bring appropriate wage subsidies to their attention.

When employers were asked for additional comments to the question, what challenges do you encounter when hiring ... students from international pathways ..., they noted post-secondary institutions should ensure students are better prepared (*workplace ready*) and equipped with:

- *Knowledge of Canadian workplace norms*, cultural nuances, specific occupational language (terminology), knowledge of teamwork and critical thinking skills.
- *Information and access to resources* for improving listening, speaking (public and workplace) and leadership skills (e.g., occupation-specific conversation circles, Local Toastmasters Clubs and communication courses offered by their institutions).

⁸Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2018). *The student's voice: National results of the 2018 CBIE international student survey*.
https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Student_Voice_Report-ENG.pdf

3.4. Employers

A Canadian study in 2018 found applicants with Asian-sounding names received 20% to 40% less callback than those with Anglo-sounding names despite having nearly identical education and experience.⁹

Benefits of hiring SFIP

A common theme that emerged in the document analysis, the survey and interviews was the value employers placed on the benefits of a diverse workforce and their willingness to hire SFIP in the future. The data analysis from the literature review and document analysis indicated employers:

- *Valued the knowledge and experience* SFIP bring from their home country and the significant local expertise from Canadian education.
- *Appreciated SFIP strong work ethic*, long-term commitment and their sense of responsibility.¹⁰
- *Welcomed SFIP technical proficiency*, cultural diversity, willingness to learn new skills and providing global perspectives and resilience.¹¹
- *Were aware of the SFIP contributions* to improvements in their company's innovation quotient, revenue and profitability.¹²

Lack of specific hiring measures for SFIP

The findings revealed there is a lack of initiative taken by employers to hire and onboard SFIP through WIL opportunities. Whereas employers who participated in the survey and interviews noted they valued a diverse workplace:

Seven percent (one of 14 survey respondents) said they lacked in-house human resources (knowledge and expertise) for navigating complicated work permits necessary for hiring and onboarding SFIP through WIL opportunities and entry-level positions.

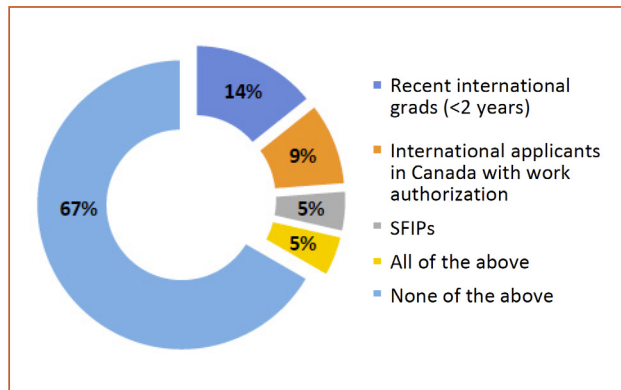
⁹ Banerjee, R., Reitz, J. G., & Oreopoulos, P. (2018). Do large employers treat racial minorities more fairly? An analysis of Canadian field experiment data. *Canadian Public Policy*, 44(1), 1-12

¹⁰ Friesen, M. R. (2011). Immigrants' integration and career development in the professional engineering workplace in the context of social and cultural capital. *Engineering Studies*, 3(2), 79-100.

¹¹ Desai-Trilokekar, R., Thomson, K., & El Masri, A. (2016). *International students as "ideal" immigrants: Ontario employers' perspective*.

¹² Momani, B., & Stirk, J. (2017, April 24). Diversity Dividend: Canada's Global Advantage. *Center for International Governance Innovation*.
www.cigionline.org/publications/diversity-dividend-canadas-global-advantage

When asked the question however, *does your organization have a defined, measurable goal for hiring from the following groups?* (e.g., recent international grads, SFIP, etc.), the following responses were identified.



Of those who said they valued a diverse workplace:

- More than two-thirds 67% (14 of 21) noted they lacked a defined, measurable goal for hiring international talent.
- The other 33% (seven of 21) said they had specific measures for hiring SFIP.
- Of the 33% (seven of 21) who responded to the question about measurable goals, only 28% (two of seven) said they had a D&I strategy, with specific steps included for hiring SFIP.

SFIP Data/metrics collection

The analysis of the 48 documents indicated that tracking data/metrics for SFIP would provide avenues for monitoring and evaluating low SFIP employment outcomes. It will also help with identifying and modifying approaches for enhancing SFIP hiring through WIL placements.

Yet, 35% (five of 14) who responded to the question said they do not track SFIP employment data/metrics. When employers were asked for example, what percentage of *WIL hires in your firm/organization were students from international pathways* (SFIPs), 14 responded.

Of the 10 (out of 14) respondents who answered the question regarding the percentage of SFIP employed in WIL placement said 18% (on average). When asked how many SFIP were hired in full-time positions, employers said approximately 20% of those on WIL placements.¹³

“ We don’t have any organized efforts to attract SFIP. When we post co-op roles, they are open to all students that are able to work in Canada, and some of those students are SFIP on a study visa.”¹⁴ ”

¹³ In the survey and interviews question, employers were asked to provide a rough estimate of the percentage of their co-op placements. Given the sensitivity around the question, they were not asked to provide exact numbers/percentage of SFIP hired.

¹⁴ Survey response.

Lack of equitable hiring practices

Roughly 70% (10 of 14) who answered the survey and interview question, “Does your organization/firm implement any equitable hiring practices for hiring SFIP?” said no, they do not employ hiring practices that might lead to greater SFIP employment (e.g., anonymizing resumes, barrier-free job descriptions, etc.). As two survey and interview respondents noted:

“ Candidates are hired through the co-op office. We hire the best candidate for the role, regardless of their background. ”

“ None [efforts taken by employers] specifically; if they apply for an open role we would consider them [SFIP] equal to a local candidate. ”

In a related finding to the question of equitable practices, 33% (seven of 21) of the survey and interview participants did not customize their onboarding processes for SFIP. The literature review and document analysis revealed large employers/companies (500+ employees) in the private sector are the most successful at recruiting, hiring and onboarding SFIP. These large employers/companies are generally located close to universities, in urban areas and within sectors that have a high demand for hard-to-find skills (e.g., technology sector).¹⁵

The findings from the analysis of 48 documents also included types of successful resources (practices and tools) employers use to support and achieve diversity through recruiting and hiring international talent. Successful resources include:

Barrier-free job descriptions, immigrant job portals, staff trainings to avoid unconscious bias and language training for new immigrants.¹⁶

¹⁵ Desai-Trilokekar, R., Thomson, K., & El Masri, A. (2016). *International students as “ideal”immigrants: Ontario employers’ perspective.*

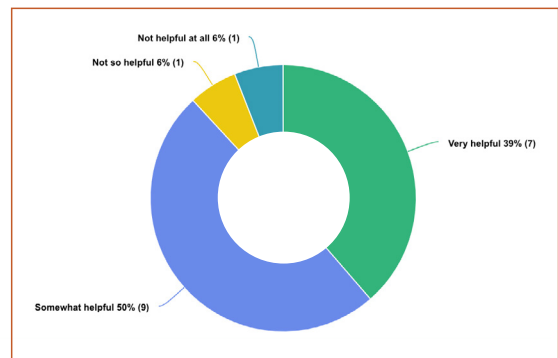
¹⁶ Immigrant Employment Council of B.C. (IECBC). (2020). *Find Immigrant Talent.*
<https://iecbc.ca/employer-tools-and-resources/find-immigrant-talent/>

Support from post-secondary institutions

“ Ideas for cultural, communication, etiquette, intercultural, learning, leadership or mentorship training ideas that our HR team can consider in the future would be helpful to know about. This way, we can brainstorm and re-evaluate our current processes more critically.¹⁷ ”

A primary finding from the survey and interviews was employers' willingness to increase diversity by recruiting, hiring and onboarding of SFIP.

When asked for instance, *how helpful would it be to have a resource that supports your hiring and onboarding of SFIP or international students*, an overwhelming majority of employers and hiring managers, 89% (16 of 18) said it would be “very helpful” or “somewhat helpful.”



Diversity and inclusion (D&I) toolkit

The overwhelming majority, 89% indicated a D&I toolkit would help them to:

- *Integrate* and/or create D&I for SFIP into the workplace.
- *Navigate* unconscious and/or conscious bias.
- *Develop* intercultural awareness and competencies for staff and hiring managers through learning tools.
- *Improve* skills for tracking data and metrics.

Employers suggestions for tools/materials in the D&I toolkit, included best practice documents, webinars, videos, infographics, in-person workshops, or targeted professional development training.

¹⁷ March 2020 online survey respondent.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

“ *These young people [international students] are the cream of the crop in terms of future Canadians ... [t]hey have post-secondary education. They are young, they are proficient in one or both of our official languages, and often they have Canadian work experience. So why wouldn't we want to hang on to them.*¹⁸ ”

The overall findings from this research revealed employers' challenges and experiences as well as opportunities for promoting greater SFIP employment outcomes. The following recommendations are discussed under the three broad categories: (1) Students from International Pathways (SFIP), (2) post-secondary institutions and (3) employers.

4.1. Improved efforts by SFIP to be more workplace ready

Although the primary goal of this research was to investigate, “*what tools, resources and frameworks are required by B.C. employers ...*,” the findings from the survey and interviews suggest students need to make more effort to be workplace ready for their placements. Greater efforts, therefore, from SFIP could include accessing and utilizing available resources, such as:

- *Enrolling in free government funded English classes*—Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada.
- *Engaging in communication* for workplace training to improve English language proficiency, soft and hard skills, as well as knowledge of Canadian workplace culture.
- *Participating in occupation-specific conversation circles* to improve listening and language skills used in specific occupations.
- *Joining and participating* in local Toastmasters clubs to help improve public speaking and leadership skills.

¹⁸ Husain cited in Neatby, S. & Yogesh, B. (2017, October 12). *Most international students leaving Canada after graduation*. Vancouver Sun. vancouversun.com/feature/how-international-students-are-filling-funding-shortfalls/chapter-4

4.2. Increased support from Post-secondary institutions to SFIP and employers

“... there will be over 860,000 job openings throughout the province. [...] 77% of more than 860,000 job openings in BC over the next ten years will require some post-secondary education or training ...”¹⁹

While SFIP could make a greater effort to be better prepared for their placements, post-secondary institutions/organizations and ACE-WIL and CEWIL must play a greater role by:

Providing students with opportunities/resources, training, networking and mentorship.

Increasing/scaling-up WIL programs by providing professional development opportunities to improve communication skills, public speaking, networking and leadership skills.

Engaging and broadening advocacy approaches/initiatives for influencing government to provide wage subsidies for SFIP on study visas. Government wage subsidies provide significant incentive for employers for accessing SFIP talent.

Developing and supporting intercultural awareness and competencies for employers and hiring managers through learning tools (videos, webinars, online courses, etc.).

Collaborating and increasing funding to employers (via organizations and institutions) to increase employment opportunities for SFIP. This would help close the gap between SFIP placements and domestic students.

Providing greater support to employers for navigating SFIP immigration pathways (Federally and Provincially) for students wanting to live and work in Canada after graduation. The University of Victoria for example, provides employers with work permit information to support them in hiring, onboarding and retaining SFIP.²⁰

Deliver greater outreach to employers, such as:

- *Connecting employers* to hiring managers who have a good track record in successfully hiring, onboarding and retaining SFIP. This coordination/collaboration could also be used to collectively develop SFIP earmarks/targets in the workplace/employment industries.
- *Increasing promotions and greater communication* to recruitment teams and employers to promote the benefits of hiring SFIP—for instance, educational resources videos, infographics, webinars and best practice documents.
- *Showcasing employers* (champions) who have embraced staff diversity and thereby, positioning themselves as innovators who meets clients’ needs in global markets.

Create a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Toolkit with guidelines and checklists to support employers in recruiting, hiring and onboarding SFIP (WIL opportunities).

¹⁹ Ministry of British Columbia. (2020, February). Good Jobs for Today and Tomorrow.

https://www.workbc.ca/getmedia/30a4a0d6-57bd-4047-8b8b-250c54b505c3/BC_Good_Jobs_For_Today_And_Tomorrow_2019.aspx

²⁰ University of Victoria. (2020). For Long-term Employment: Co-operative education program & career services. Hiring international students. www.uvic.ca/coopandcareer/hire/international-students/index.php

4.3. Greater efforts by employers to create and/or integrate D&I strategies/practices

“ *Having immigrants in your workforce is an absolute necessity to be successful in business today and in the coming years.*”²¹

An exciting opportunity highlighted in this research is employers' aspirations for increasing diversity in their workplace through hiring and onboarding SFIP, including:

Integrating and/or creating hiring, onboarding and retention goals in D&I strategies such as:

Developing and implementing a targeted approach to recruiting, hiring and onboarding SFIP through WIL opportunities.

Retaining SFIP after graduation by earmarking a number/percent of former WIL students to be considered for full-time employment.

Customizing human resource (HR) processes and practices to ensure SFIP have fair and equitable access to job applications and positions by:

- *Creating barrier-free job descriptions* with the specific requirements, duties and expectations and omit industry acronyms and slang/jargon.
- *Anonymizing resumes* for hiring managers that omit identity markers (name, nationality, immigration status, etc.).
- *Tracking and evaluating data/metrics annually* to determine whether or not initiatives and tools/practices are successful.
- *Designing ethically sensitive job interviews* by using scenario-based style questions, common professional vocabulary/language as well as knowledge/awareness of various communication styles (body language, voice tone and other mannerisms).

Employing diverse recruitment and retention approaches to select and retain SFIP talent by:

Creating and/or customizing onboarding programs to enhance recruitment and retaining SFIP talent—increase intercultural intelligence training for hiring managers and staff.

Providing professional development opportunities—networking, training programs, etc.)

Modifying mentorship and orientation programs to provide a better understanding of workplace etiquette, industry specific language and to support better social inclusion.

Customizing modules for specific workplace communication skills/etiquette and systems.

Developing and implementing/integrating tracking metrics (numbers/percentage) over a period of time (e.g., past three years) and monitor and evaluate annually²² to ensure success of hiring, onboarding and retaining SFIP through WIL opportunities.

²¹ Mann, M. (2019). Onboarding newcomers: A toolkit for BC employers. *The Immigrant Employment Council of BC*.
<https://iecbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IECBC-Onboarding2018-webV2.pdf>

²² Success metrics include tracking the percentage of SFIP who return for a work term with the same employer and the number hired into full-time roles.

4.4. Further research

A unique finding from this research is government **wage subsidies** as a major barrier for SFIP on study permits. Further research, therefore, on wage subsidies presents an avenue for increasing SFIP employment outcomes (both in WIL and entry-level career positions). Conducting comparative studies on the success of wage subsidy programs, such as those in the Atlantic provinces²³ (e.g., Nova Scotia) will reveal their effectiveness for all students, not only SFIP.

There is also need for further investigation on the **disconnect** between the high value employers placed on D&I and the **lack of specific steps** taken to achieve it. Deeper exploration of successful D&I approaches used by large companies would serve as best practices. In addition, this may uncover whether or not low hiring and retention rates are true for all students, not just SFIP.

More research is crucial on the various aspects of D&I in the workplace and employment markers—the connection between **gender and sexual identity, race, class, ethnicity, and age** and SFIP employment outcomes in certain industry sectors (technology, construction, oil and gas, education and health). A richer understanding of D&I would also help to expose the different layers of bias (whether conscious or not) and inequality in the workplace (industry sectors) and thus, avenues for addressing them. It is important to address bias and inequality since:

“Companies with the highest levels of diversity (either gender, ethnic, or racial) are anywhere from 15-35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry's national average.”²⁴

“[...] steps to reduce gender inequality in the workplace may benefit Canada's economy by as much as \$150 billion by 2026. If the gender gap was eliminated entirely, that number could rise to as high as \$420 billion.”²⁵

Finally, diversity and inclusion (D&I) are generally used together or as synonymous, when they are not. Supplementary research is needed on effective **inclusive approaches/practices** for greater SFIP onboarding and retention after graduation. The lack of inclusive practices once SFIP are employed can negatively impact both employment outcomes (retention) and thus, diversity in the workplace.

Additional research, therefore, is needed on how employers can better cultivate a work culture which celebrates SFIP diverse voices, expertise and experience. Greater inclusive practices would yield mutually beneficial results, such as SFIP increased employment outcomes and business innovation and productivity.

²³ Acadia University. (2020). *Funding for employers. Nova Scotia funding programs*. Retrieved from <https://co-op.acadiau.ca/funding-for-employers.html>

²⁴ Pete Evans. (2017, Jun 21). *Why How much does gender inequality cost Canada? \$150B report finds*. CBC News. www.cbc.ca/news/business/gender-equality-mckinsey-1.4169287

²⁵ Canadian Women's Foundation. (2017, August). *How does it benefit companies and organizations to foster women's leadership? Fact Sheet*. <https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Facts-About-Women-and-Leadership.pdf>

5. CONCLUSION

“Without immigration, in BC alone, over 240,000 jobs could go unfilled through 2027. With their skills, expertise, and connections to communities around the world, immigrants bring unique perspectives, and... understand unmet needs in underleveraged markets.”²⁶

This research investigated the tools and resources required by employers for effective recruitment, hiring, onboarding and retaining Students from International Pathways (SFIP). The four key findings were: (1) SFIP’s low levels of Canadian employment skills (communication skills and work experience), (2) government barriers (wage subsidies and immigration uncertainty), (3) insufficient support from post-secondary institutions (ACE-WIL, CEWIL and career programs/offices) and (4) limited steps implemented by employers and expertise for hiring, onboarding and retaining SFIP.

The findings moved beyond employers’ challenges and provided recommendations for promoting greater SFIP employment outcomes, including:

Improved efforts of SFIP to increase their skills and competencies.

Greater support from post-secondary institutions—scale-up WIL programs, advocate for wage subsidies and provide greater outreach and resources to employers.

Increased efforts by employers to create and/or improve integration of D&I practices in their workplace (e.g., customize human resource practices, creating onboarding programs, etc.).

The primary outcome of this research is the “Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit” consisting of six tools.

TOOL 1: Integrate and/or create D&I for SFIP
TOOL 2: Customize job description
TOOL 3: Anonymize resumes

TOOL 4: Conduct culturally sensitive job interviews
TOOL 5: Support onboarding for SFIP
TOOL 6: Create success measures

There were some research limitations (lack of publicly available data and the low survey/interview response rate) and bias toward B.C. and the technology sector. These limitations, however, did uncover areas for further research on the effectiveness of wage subsidies, deeper dimensions of D&I (gender, race, ethnicity, age, etc.) and successful inclusion practices for SFIP.

This research also illuminated an important pathway for increasing SFIP employment outcomes, specifically, greater collaboration and coordination between government ministries, post-secondary institutions, ACE-WIL and CEWIL, and employers.

²⁶ Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IECBC). (2019). Onboarding newcomers: A toolkit for BC employers. Introduction why another Toolkit? <https://iecbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/IECBC-Onboarding2018-webV2.pdf>

APPENDIX I
Diversity & Inclusion
TOOLKIT



Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) **Toolkit** *for Employers and Hiring Managers*

Six Tools for Diversity in Work Integrated Learning (WIL):
*Supporting employers to attract, hire and onboard
Students from International Pathways (SFIP)*

December 2020

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) TOOLKIT

For Employers and Hiring Managers



INTRODUCTION

Why should diversity and inclusion of Students from International Pathways (SFIP) be important to Canadian employers?* Simply put, SFIP bring diverse and global perspectives to the workplace that can lead to an increase in revenue, innovation and productivity. Yet, the trend between 2006 and 2017 was after graduation, 9.7% of university-educated immigrants were unemployed compared to 2.9% of Canadian-born graduates.** To find out why, a study was launched in 2015 to explore, “*Employers Perspectives About Hiring Students from International Pathways*.” The result, greater awareness of the benefits of hiring SFIP is needed as well as support for employers to achieve greater diversity in their workplace.

Given the findings from the 2015 study, the “*Supporting Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Employment Outcomes for Students from International Pathways (SFIP)*” was launched in 2020 to investigate: **what tools, resources, and frameworks are required by BC employers to facilitate the effective attraction, hiring and onboarding of students from international pathways?** The research findings have led to the six tools included in this document.

This toolkit is the result of the support and financial contributions provided by the British Columbia’s Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training and the Association for Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning BC/Yukon (ACE-WIL). It has also been made possible with the continued efforts of the ACE-WIL Research Committee.*** It has been developed with the invaluable input, commitment and interest of employers, hiring managers and individuals who participated in the research project.

The six tools included in this document are: how to integrate and/or create diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the workplace, create barrier-free job descriptions, anonymize resumes, conduct culturally sensitive job interviews, support onboarding of SFIP, and how to create success metrics for hiring initiatives.

TOOLKIT OBJECTIVES

- ☐ Increase employers’ understanding of how to integrate D&I for SFIP in their workplace.
- ☐ Promote greater awareness and tools for navigating unconscious bias.
- ☐ Enhance intercultural awareness and competencies for recruiting, hiring and onboarding SFIP.
- ☐ Develop skills on how to better track success of SFIP initiatives.

This toolkit is a practical guide to assist employers with promoting greater employment outcomes by attracting, hiring and onboarding SFIP through WIL opportunities. It is not intended as a comprehensive set of strategies, resources and/or tools for achieving diversity and inclusion in the workplace, but rather as a starting point for public post-secondary institutions, employers and organizations that hire students.

* Students from international pathways, include international students, refugees, new immigrants and permanent Canadian residents enrolled at a post-secondary institution.

** Statistics Canada. (2018). *The Canadian immigrant labour market: Recent trends from 2006 to 2017*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-606-x/71-606-x2018001-eng.htm>

*** The ACE-WIL Research Committee consists of representatives from six post-secondary institutions, including: Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, Langara College, Royal Roads University, and the British Columbia Institute of Technology.

OVERVIEW

Supporting Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) for Employers and Hiring Managers



This Toolkit provides six tools to increase your engagement with Students from International Pathways, to bring diverse and global perspectives to your organization.



Between 2019-2029, B.C. is expected to post 861,000 job openings which require post-secondary education. There are 56,000 post-secondary international students in B.C. that could fill these roles.***

TOOL 1

Integrate and/or create
diversity and inclusion
(D&I) for SFIP

TOOL 2

**Customize human
resource practices:**
create barrier-free job
descriptions

TOOL 3

**Customize human
resource practices:**
anonymize resumes

TOOL 4

**Customize human
resource practices:**
conduct culturally sensitive
job interviews

TOOL 5

**Support onboarding
for SFIP**

TOOL 6

**Create success measures
for SFIP**

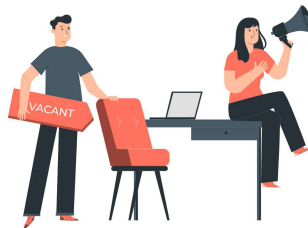
* WorkBC. (2020). B.C.'s Labour Market Outlook: 2019 Edition. Retrieved from <https://www.workbc.ca/labour-market-industry/labour-market-outlook.aspx>

** Government of Canada. (2020). *Temporary Residents: Study Permit Holders – Monthly IRCC updates*. Retrieved from <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/90115b00-f9b8-49e8-afa3-b4cff8facaee>.

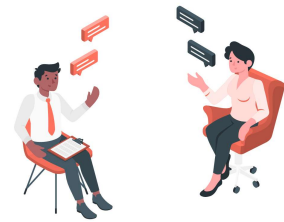
1. Integrate and/or create Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) for SFIP



Collaborate and partner with post-secondary institutions to promoting SFIP employment.



Engage in advocacy initiatives to create financial support for SFIP employment.



Develop intercultural awareness and competencies through learning tools. (e.g., videos, webinars, on-line courses, etc.)



Provide professional development opportunities. (e.g., networking, team-building, training programs, language circles, etc.)



Create an inclusive community for SFIP. (See Tool # 5 *Support Onboarding for SFIP*)



Create and/or increase SFIP measurable goals. (e.g., annual targets for SFIP to be included in WIL placements.)

2. Customize Human Resource (HR) Practices:

Create barrier-free job descriptions

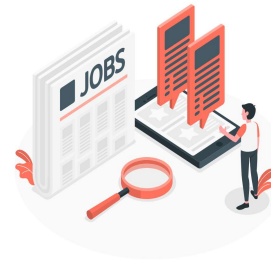
Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) in the Description Introduction

- ☐ Highlight your D&I goals, policies and practices (if applicable).
- ☐ Describe your business and/organization's work culture.
- ☐ Explain how your workplace embraces inclusion. (e.g., diversity of leadership team, diverse professional and social groups, etc.)



Duties and Responsibilities

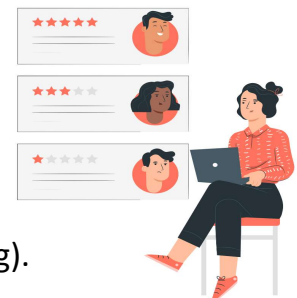
- ☐ Describe the specific duties and expectations using generally accepted terminology in the field.
- ☐ Use a personal and/or conversational tone without acronyms, jargon or slang.
- ☐ Describe reporting structure. (e.g., you will be reporting to the Project Director)



Qualifications (skills and competencies):

Essential

- ☐ Be clear and avoid generalizations and assumptions on requirements.
- ☐ Ask for related work experience (local and international).
- ☐ Describe required language fluency (verbal, written and reading).



Additional/desirable: make clear additional requirements are a bonus.

- ☐ Indicate flexibility if the essential and/or minimum requirements are not met.
- ☐ Highlight openness to international work experience.

3. Customize Human Resource (HR) Practices:

Reduce Unconscious Bias:

Customize and anonymize resumes








*A Canadian study found that applicants with Asian-sounding names received 20% to 40% less callbacks than those with Anglo-sounding names despite having nearly identical education and experience.**

Sensitize Hiring Managers about the benefits of employing Student from International Pathways (SFIP)

- ☐ Encourage and support intercultural awareness and competencies training for staff by providing resources for learning opportunities. (e.g., discussions, videos, webinar, online courses, etc.)
- ☐ Promote the benefits of anonymizing resumes as a tool for recruiting and hiring diverse applicants.
- ☐ Provide anonymous resume templates.

Customize and Anonymize Resumes

Remove the following information from the candidate's profile and resume

				
Name & address	Citizenship & country of origin	Educational institutions attended	Languages spoken	Gender

Track Metrics to Determine Success of Using Anonymous Resumes

- ☐ % change in workplace diversity before and after anonymizing resumes. (e.g., create baseline data)
- ☐ % change in the number of SFIP (students from international pathways) hired, before and after anonymizing resumes.

* Banerjee, R., Reitz, J. G., & Oreopoulos, P. (2018). Do large employers treat racial minorities more fairly? An analysis of Canadian field experiment data. *Canadian Public Policy*, 44(1), 1-12

4. Customize Human Resource (HR) practices

Conduct culturally sensitive job interviews

Review Interview Questions for Bias

- ☐ Focus on questions related to the duties of the job.
- ☐ Use situational interview questions where possible.
- ☐ Ask for examples and specific details to understand students' skills.

Practice Active Listening

- ☐ Seek clarifications if the student's answer is unclear.
- ☐ Avoid assessing communication skills based solely on a student's pronunciation and pauses in answers.
- ☐ Focus on communication skills required for the job.



Cultural and Gender Differences in Body Language

Remember: appropriate body language differs across cultures, ethnicity, gender identity, race, age, class, and social status.

- ☐ Non-traditional Canadian body language may not mean untrustworthiness but a respect for authority. (e.g., lack of eye-contact)
- ☐ Definition of personal space varies greatly across cultures, ethnicity, gender identity, race, age, class, and social status.

Avoid slang, jargon or acronyms:

- ☐ Communicate in clear language commonly used in Canada.
- ☐ Clarify uncommon or local words and phrases.
- ☐ Realize that technical terminology may differ across countries.



5. Support onboarding *for* Students from International Pathways

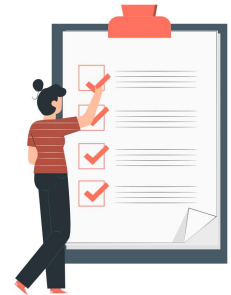
ACE
WIL



*In 2019, 56,000 international students with a study permit were enrolled in B.C. post-secondary institutions, the second-highest in the country. **
*61% of international students planned to work in Canada after graduation. ***

Process

- ☐ Provide overview of your workplace culture.
- ☐ Share business/organizational process playbook and policy guides.
- ☐ Provide helpful resources (online/offline) such as orientation package with instructions on workplace processes and logistics.
- ☐ Support the completion of employment-related forms.



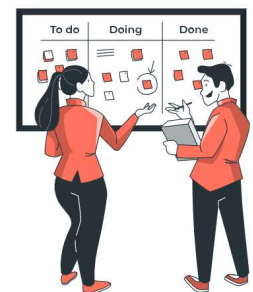
People

- ☐ Connect SFIP with a volunteer mentor and/or buddy.
- ☐ Set up meetings with relevant managers and staff.
- ☐ Introduce SFIP to relevant professional and social groups.
- ☐ Add to mail lists to ensure invitations to key meetings.
- ☐ Design group onboarding activities with SFIP.
- ☐ Organize and invite SFIP to formal events & social activities.



Performance

- ☐ Organize job shadowing to provide comprehensive onboarding.
- ☐ Set clear job expectations and goals.
- ☐ Provide regular and balanced feedback.
- ☐ Offer resources/opportunities to improve interpersonal skills.
- ☐ Organize work culture competency training.



* Government of Canada. (2020). *Temporary Residents: Study Permit Holders – Monthly IRCC updates*. Retrieved from <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/90115b00-f9b8-49e8-afa3-b4cff8facaee>.

** Canadian Bureau for International Education (2018). *The student's voice: National results of the 2018 CBIE international student survey*. Retrieved from https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Student_Voice_Report-ENG.pdf

6. Create Success Measures for Students from International Pathways

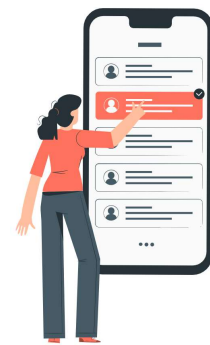
ACE
WIL



*“These young people [international students] are the cream of the crop in terms of future Canadians ... [t]hey have post-secondary education. They are young, they are proficient in one or both of our official languages, and often they have Canadian work experience. So why wouldn't we want to hang on to them?” **

Track Metrics on Hiring Initiatives for SFIP

- ☐ Annual number and/or percent of SFIP hired through WIL placements.
- ☐ Number and/or percent of WIL roles filled by SFIP in previous years.
- ☐ Number and/or percent of SFIP hired for full-time roles after their co-op term was completed.
- ☐ Number and/or percent of repeat co-op/work integrated learning (WIL) students being SFIP.
- ☐ Number and/or percent of SFIP who are satisfied with the co-op experience at the end of their work term.



* See Hussen, 2017 as cited in Neatby & Yogesh, 2017. Neatby, S. & Yogesh, B. (2017, October 12). Most international students leaving Canada after graduation. *Vancouver Sun*. Retrieved from <https://vancouversun.com/feature/how-international-students-are-filling-funding-shortfalls/chapter-4>