Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Research Matters

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Purpose: To provide a framework that allows us to understand the ecosystem required to enable students to launch successful startups.

Methodology: The authors developed a framework based on existing literature and their own empirical research.

Key Findings: Eight elements of the ecosystem framework are identified and discussed: the university environment, external context, evolution (time), investors, support, entrepreneurs, and activities (pre-accelerators to accelerators and incubators).

Practitioner’s Thoughts by Matthew Rempel (Director, Career-Integrated Learning, Sheridan College, and President-Elect, Co-operative Education & Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL) Canada)

What insights did you gain from reading this article that were useful to you?
Wright, Siegel, and Mustar (2017) introduce a comprehensive framework of entrepreneurial ecosystems for student start-ups. Our students are actors in unique ecosystems influenced by the external environment and their academic institution. Faculty/staff can use this framework to access their institution’s positionality within this ecosystem and identify its strengths and weaknesses. While there is no magic eight ball that can predict the success of a new business, we can use this framework to assist students to plan for their start-ups and understand how to best use their ecosystem to their advantage.

How might the results of this work impact how you do your job?
The importance of mentors, investors, and other supportive actors in industry are critical to prosperous start-up ecosystems. We also know Entrepreneurship is an emerging form of WIL defined by CEWIL (2019). For those of us who work in Career Services or Work-Integrated Learning departments, we know we are the epicentre of industry and student matches. So how might we leverage our relationships and connections to support our entrepreneurial students? How are we partnering with on-campus incubators, faculty, and entrepreneurial centres? Lastly, as we consider Entrepreneurship WIL, how can we leverage the understanding of our own ecosystems to inform our program design?