Employer Perceptions of Co-Curricular Engagement and the Co-Curricular Record in the Hiring Process

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

Throughout media channels, there have been concerns about a perceived job skills gap, which in turn have led to questions about the value of a university education. Canadian universities and colleges have developed the Co-Curricular Record (CCR) as a means to incentivize and recognize student engagement in co-curricular opportunities, which research has shown to positively impact student development, retention, and success (Astin, 1993; Chickering, 1969; Tinto, 1987). This study surveyed employers to explore current hiring practices, including the current value of candidate materials and hiring factors, desirable soft skills, and the perceived value of the CCR. This thesis explores the potential use of the CCR in the hiring process, and argues that the CCR can act as a translation tool, by elevating the value of co-curricular experiences in developing and articulating soft skills. This thesis also discusses current challenges and provides a series of recommendations and next steps.
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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. iii

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... vi

List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ vii

Definition of Terms .............................................................................................................. viii

Chapter 1: Introduction .......................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Background and Context of the Study ........................................................................... 1
  1.2 Purpose of the Study .................................................................................................... 5
  1.3 Research Questions ..................................................................................................... 6
  1.4 Significance of the Study ............................................................................................. 7
  1.5 Assumptions ................................................................................................................ 10
  1.6 Researcher’s Relationship to the Study ..................................................................... 10
  1.8 Organization of Thesis ............................................................................................... 11

Chapter 2: Literature Review ................................................................................................ 13
  2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 13
  2.2 Purpose of an Education and the Job Skills “Gap” .................................................... 13
  2.3 Candidate Materials & Hiring Factors ....................................................................... 21
  2.4 Changing Nature of Postsecondary Education .......................................................... 30
  2.5 Benefits of Student Engagement .............................................................................. 34
  2.6 E-portfolios ............................................................................................................... 38
  2.7 Co-Curricular Record ................................................................................................ 40
  2.8 Chapter Summary ....................................................................................................... 45

Chapter 3: Methodology ........................................................................................................ 50
  3.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 50
  3.2 Research Questions ..................................................................................................... 50
  3.3 Research Design and Methodology .......................................................................... 51
  3.4 Instrument Design ...................................................................................................... 52
  3.5 Participant Selection and Data Collection .................................................................. 55
  3.6 Industry Groupings ..................................................................................................... 58
  3.7 Data Analysis .............................................................................................................. 59
  3.8 Limitations of Study ................................................................................................... 61
  3.9 Chapter Summary ....................................................................................................... 62
Chapter 4: Findings ................................................................................................................. 64
  4.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................. 64
  4.2 Candidate Materials & Hiring Factors ........................................................................... 64
  4.3 Competencies/Skills .................................................................................................... 72
  4.4 Co-Curricular Record ................................................................................................. 75
  4.5 Chapter Summary ....................................................................................................... 79

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations ............................................ 83
  5.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 83
  5.2 Discussion .................................................................................................................. 84
  5.3 Conclusions ................................................................................................................. 96
  5.4 Implications ............................................................................................................... 99
  5.5 Recommendations .................................................................................................... 104
  5.6 Next Steps ............................................................................................................... 110

References .......................................................................................................................... 112

Appendices .......................................................................................................................... 120
  Appendix A: Invitation Letter ............................................................................................ 120
  Appendix B: Welcome Screen ........................................................................................... 121
  Appendix C: Survey Protocol ............................................................................................ 123
  Appendix D: Reminder Email .......................................................................................... 131
List of Tables

Table 1. Emails Sent – By Industry ................................................................. 61

Table 2. New Industry Groupings ........................................................................ 67

Table 3. Ranking of Hiring Factors – By Industry ................................................ 76

Table 4. Top 5 Competencies Selected Across Industry Groupings ...................... 81
List of Figures

Figure 1. Sample of Co-Curricular Record .......................................................... xi

Figure 2. Required Candidate Materials ............................................................... 72

Figure 3. Importance of Candidate Materials & Factors. ................................. 73

Figure 4. Importance of Hiring Factors. ............................................................... 76

Figure 5. Importance of Hiring Factors – By Industry. ................................... 77

Figure 6. Competencies Selected by Respondents .......................................... 80

Figure 7. Articulation of Competencies .............................................................. 82

Figure 8. Reviewing a CCR. .............................................................................. 83

Figure 9. Reviewing a CCR – By Industry. ....................................................... 84

Figure 10. Additional CCR Information. ............................................................ 86

Figure 11. “Translation Tool” Venn Diagram. ................................................... 104

Figure 12. Summit “Dot-mocracy” Activity Photo ............................................. 109
Definition of Terms

*Co-Curricular Activities:*

In the first section of the survey, employers were asked to indicate how important “extracurricular participation” is in the hiring process. This term was used since this is often used in the literature and among employers. The following description was then provided to employers prior to questions about the CCR:

Often referred to as extracurricular, co-curricular refers to university-affiliated activities that are outside the academic curricula, and provide opportunities for intentional learning and development. While many people refer to this as extracurricular, overtime postsecondary institutions have started to adopt the word “co-curricular” to signify that these experiences should be part of the academic experience. Types of activities that may be captured include: leadership opportunities (orientation, residence life, student clubs & government, etc.), mentorship opportunities, community outreach and volunteerism, international experiences, athletics (intramural councils and varsity athletics), positions on formal boards and committees, and some student staff positions.

The remainder of the survey used the language of “co-curricular”. In this thesis, the words “extracurricular” and “co-curricular” are used interchangeably, since both words were used in the survey. However, there is a distinction between the two terms. Extracurricular has come to define opportunities that are not tied to learning outcomes and competencies, and often occur outside of the institution (e.g. playing soccer in a community club). Alternatively, co-curricular refers to opportunities that are part of the educational experience, tied to the institution, and demonstrate learning outcomes and competencies developed through engagement (e.g. residence don, student government) (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014).
Co-Curricular Record (CCR):

The survey provided a definition of the CCR following the clarification of extracurricular versus co-curricular:

The CCR provides a database of activities that allows students to search for opportunities beyond the classroom. Competencies and skills are linked to each activity, which will help students see the connection between their engagement and development. Students will be encouraged to reflect on the competencies and skills gained through their experience. These experiences and competencies are then printed on an official institutional document.

This definition highlights the three aspects of the program: search for opportunities, connect to competencies, and record on an official institutional document (Elias & Drea, 2013).

Respondents were then provided with a link to the following sample record:

**Figure 1. Sample of Co-Curricular Record**
Soft Skills/Competencies:

Throughout this thesis, the words competencies, skills, soft skills, and transferable skills will be used interchangeably due to the varying language used across research and CCRs. Competencies refer to “the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours that employees use in performing their work” (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2011). For most CCRs across Canada, institutions use competencies, skills, or learning outcomes to refer to the learning and development students’ experience through their engagement (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). Conversely, the terminology more commonly used in the literature and publications that focus on employers and the hiring process is soft skills and transferable skills. Unlike hard skills, which are related to specific knowledge, tools, or techniques required for a profession, soft skills refers to the “collection of our social, communication, and self-management behaviours…that enable us to work effectively” (Ryerson University, 2011). Some common soft skills include communication, leadership, and teamwork. Institutions include these skills in their competency and learning outcomes frameworks. There are two major frameworks that institutions have used and/or adapted for the purpose of the CCR: Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) and Frameworks for Assessing Learning and Development Outcomes (FALDO). The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2009) “promotes standards to enhance opportunities for student learning and development from higher education programs and services”. The CAS framework includes six broad domains that capture a long list of development outcomes, including critical thinking, collaboration, and technological competence. FALDO stems from the CAS Standards, and is intended to help professionals assess learning outcomes, and has a list of 16 learning outcomes that are linked to achievement statements. This includes learning outcomes such as social responsibility, appreciating diversity, and leadership development (Strayhorn, 2006).
Using this framework, institutions ask students to select from a list of achievement statements, which are then linked to learning outcomes on the backend (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). For the purpose of this thesis, I will use soft skills as the umbrella term to describe competencies and transferable skills, such as communication and teamwork.

**Validation:**

This refers to the process by which student participation is completed and verified for a particular co-curricular opportunity. While most institutions have a requirement that a recognized staff/faculty must fulfill this role, some institutions allow students in leadership roles to act as a validator. This may include verifying that a student has completed a certain number of hours, meetings, and/or tasks. Some institutions also require students to submit a reflection, which is intended to encourage students to connect their experience to competencies and skills (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014).
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Context of the Study

What is the value and purpose of a postsecondary education? The rhetoric in the media has focused on issues of youth unemployment and underemployment, lack of job readiness, the perceived job skills gap, and questions about the value of a university degree (Deveau, 2015; Hirsh, 2013; Pitman, 2014; Wente, 2013). The university is meant to provoke thoughtful and intellectual discussions, challenge assumptions, and provide a space for student growth and development. It is about the journey of acquiring knowledge and skills and fostering a culture of lifelong learning. While most university degrees do not provide formal “job training,” it is intended to prepare students for future career prospects, by encouraging the development of core competencies and skills. While hard skills relate to specific knowledge, tools, or techniques required for a profession, soft skills are the behaviours that allow employees to work effectively in a work environment, such as communication, professionalism, and teamwork (Ryerson University, 2011). Soft skills can be developed through a myriad of experiences, both curricular and co-curricular, and are transferable in nature. While these soft skills are desirable in the job market, the absence of these skills from students and recent graduates has perpetuated concerns about a job skills gap and the university’s ability to produce job-ready graduates.

The hiring process provides insight into a candidate’s qualifications (i.e. educational background) and skills (i.e. communication), and literature has demonstrated the large emphasis employers place on soft skills. Employers look for indicators that demonstrate the possession of skills, such as communication, teamwork, social intelligence, problem solving, and work ethic (Boatwright & Stamps, 1988; Canadian Council of Chief Executives, 2014; Kelley & Gaedeke...
While employers look for these qualities, candidates often lack the ability to adequately articulate and demonstrate those skills in the resume and interview (Harris Interactive Public Relations Research, 2013). This perpetuates the rhetoric of the perceived job skills gap, and the failing attempt of universities in preparing its graduates for employment. Throughout media channels, we continuously see headlines such as: “Ontario skills mismatch must be addressed” (Howcroft, 2013), “Skills shortage top concern, employers say” (Flavelle, 2014), and “Why can’t today’s graduates get hired?” (Wente, 2013). These articles highlight the perceived lack of soft and hard skills among candidates, and the role that education should play in addressing this gap.

In response to these criticisms, there has been an emphasis on the importance of a well-rounded university experience and the value of work-integrated learning and experiential opportunities from government and education-focused organizations. The Council of Ontario Universities (2014a) released, “Bringing Life to Learning at Ontario Universities,” a report which advocates for and demonstrates the importance of work-integrated learning and experiential learning opportunities. In this, the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU), Brad Duguid, argues for the importance of experiential learning and its effect on developing highly skilled graduates for the 21st century economy. A postsecondary experience can foster a sense of growth and development, both within and beyond the classroom, by providing opportunities with hands-on experience that develop soft skills that are valued in the labour market. The development of soft skills is a priority of the MTCU, along with their goals to track outcomes for students over time, improve the postsecondary experience, improve job readiness, focus on underrepresented populations, and foster a culture of continuous learning (Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, 2013-14). Experiential learning opportunities
are the conduit to achieving these goals, since research demonstrates the impact of engagement on student development and success (Astin, 1993; Chickering, 1969; Tinto, 1987). Challenging the criticisms of a university education, the Council of Ontario Universities (2014b) recently released a report titled “University Works” that demonstrates the continued value of a degree and the success of its graduates. The report presents data from Ontario’s MTCU and Statistics Canada, which highlights trends of university graduates, and demonstrates graduates’ success in employment and earnings compared to graduates with other levels of credentials. Universities have contributed to this dialogue by developing more intentional programming focused on experiential learning, which meets the needs of 21st century students and the changing economy.

At the institutional level, universities and colleges across Canada have been developing a Co-Curricular Record (CCR) to encourage a more robust and engaging educational experience. The CCR is a multi-faceted program, which is intended to encourage student engagement in co-curricular opportunities and provide an avenue for students to reflect on and articulate what they have learned through their engagement. Studies and theories (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1987) have shown that engagement in these activities can increase student satisfaction and sense of belonging, which in turn increases retention rates, student success and graduation rates. Furthermore, co-curricular engagement provides opportunities for student learning and development, the clarification of interests, a sense of purpose, and the understanding of one’s self (Burt et al., 2011; Elliot, 2009; Haber & Komives, 2009). Theories that support the benefits of co-curricular engagement and its influence on student success, experience, and retention have underpinned the institutional motivation to create a CCR (University of Toronto, 2014). In addition, the rhetoric about youth unemployment, underemployment, and the perceived job skills gap has influenced institutions to demonstrate the practical benefits of an academic education, and its ability to produce job-ready graduates with a
range of transferable competencies and soft skills (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). The CCR addresses these concerns by fostering a culture of skill development and reflection, which allows students to identify and articulate the transferable skills they developed through their experiences.

For many institutions, the CCR fulfills three major purposes: search, connect, and record (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014; Elias & Drea, 2013). Students 1) have a searchable database to find opportunities that suite their lifestyle and interests, 2) are encouraged to reflect on the competencies and skills gained through those experiences, and 3) have the ability to market those experiences and competencies on an official validated institutional document (Elias & Drea, 2013; University of Calgary, 2014; University of Toronto, 2014; Wilfrid Laurier University, 2014). The intended outcome of the CCR is to foster engagement and to influence student development, retention, and success.

The CCR may contribute to student success in a number of ways. For the institution, encouraging students to be engaged in co-curricular experiences will increase retention and graduation rates, and measures of student satisfaction and experience (Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1987). For students, the goal is that they will be more likely to persist through to graduation, and have the competencies and skills they can market when applying for graduate programs, jobs, for scholarships and award applications (University of Calgary, 2014; University of Toronto, 2014; Wilfrid Laurier University, 2014). For employers, the hope is that students will be graduating and entering the job market with employable soft skills that they are able to articulate in the hiring process. For these reasons among others, there has been a proliferation of CCRs entering the higher education scene, with over 40 universities and colleges across Canada recently launching a CCR, with many others in the discussion, development, or implementation phase.
Some of the institutions that have a CCR include: University of Toronto, McGill University, Western University, Wilfrid Laurier University, Dalhousie University, University of Calgary, University of Alberta, and University of Manitoba.

Although a large number of institutions have developed the CCR as a means to influence student success, there is limited research on how the CCR impacts the student experience, how it supports the development of soft skills, and how employers value it in the hiring process. Bryan, Mann, Nelson and North conducted the most relevant study in 1981, where they looked at employer perceptions of the Co-Curricular Transcript (CCT). They found that 71% of employers surveyed indicated that they “would definitely want” or “prefer to have” a CCT in the job application process, and a majority of respondents supported the inclusion of some measure of competencies gained through co-curricular engagement. While this study provides some insight of employer perceptions, this study was conducted over 30 years ago in the American context. With the rapid adoption of CCRs in Canada, there is a need for relevant research on the impact of the CCR in addressing concerns of the skills gap, and employer perceptions of the CCR and its value in the hiring process.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Postsecondary institutions argue that students can use the CCR in the hiring process—both as a learning tool to help students reflect on the competencies developed, and as a record that demonstrates experiences and skills to employers (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). The CCR has existed in some form for over a decade in Canada, with most institutions launching the program in the last few years. However, there are a lack of research studies that explore employer perceptions of the CCR and its value in the hiring process, especially in the Canadian context. Before one can adequately discern the value of the
CCR from the perspective of employers, it is important to understand current hiring practices and the role that co-curricular engagement may (or may not) play in those practices.

The purpose of this research study is to explore whether there is a need and value for Co-Curricular Records in the hiring process. This research study explores current hiring processes in order to better understand the context of labour market interests, including the current value of specific candidate materials and factors, skills employers look for, and employers’ perception of candidates’ abilities to articulate skills. Understanding the current context, including the current value of co-curricular engagement and desirable skills, can be used to explore the CCRs potential value. The study also explored employer interest in reviewing the CCR in the hiring process, and assessed the value of information highlighted on the record. The objective of this study is to investigate and better understand current hiring processes, and to assess if there is potential value in the CCR.

1.3 Research Questions

There are three broad purposes of this research study: to understand the level of importance of candidate materials and factors, to highlight the competencies employers seek in the hiring process, and to assess the role the CCR may play in the hiring process. To assess these broad purposes, this study explores the following research questions:

**Candidate Materials & Factors**

RQ1: What level of importance do employers place on different types of candidate materials (i.e., application form, cover letter, resume, interview, academic transcript, writing sample and social profile) and factors (i.e., educational degree, academic subject focus, grades, previous work experience, extracurricular participation, awards/official recognition, and references’
feedback) in the hiring process?

RQ1b: Does the level of importance placed on different hiring factors vary by the employer’s industry?

**Competencies**

RQ2: What competencies do employers look for in the hiring process?

RQ2b: Do the competencies that employers look for vary by industry?

RQ2c: How do employers rate the ability of candidates to describe the competencies and skills developed outside of the classroom?

**Co-Curricular Record**

RQ3: How likely would employers review a CCR in the hiring process?

RQ3b: What information on the CCR do employers find most valuable?

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

There has been an ongoing discussion about the perceived skills gap in the job market, and concerns about youth unemployment and underemployment (Benzie & Ferguson, 2014; Conference Board of Canada, 2014; Flavelle, 2014, Wente, 2013). With this, there has been an increased focus on the importance of soft skills and preparing students and recent graduates for the job market (Council of Ontario Universities, 2014a; Gertler, 2014; Peter D. Hart Research Associates Inc., 2006). The Co-Curricular Record is a tangible initiative that is focused on addressing these concerns, by elevating the importance of an education that develops both students’ hard and soft skills, and by inviting students to reflect on and articulate the skills they develop as a result of their co-curricular engagement. Universities and colleges are widening the focus of an education to encompass co-curricular engagement, and helping students both develop and articulate transferable soft skills, which they can then highlight in the job search process.
The CCR is intended to address a number of concerns and to fill a gap for a wide range of stakeholders, including: students, employers, institutions, government, and the public. For students, the CCR highlights the importance of engaging in both curricular and co-curricular opportunities. This engagement influences students’ experience, retention, success, and development. The CCR helps students find opportunities, persist through to graduation, and articulate and demonstrate the transferable skills that they can market to employers and graduate/professional programs. For employers, by encouraging students to engage in opportunities where they are developing desirable skills—such as communication, teamwork, and leadership—there goal is to have an increase in more qualified and job-ready graduates. Encouraging the reflection and articulation of skills will hopefully provide employers with more self-aware candidates, who will be better able to articulate the desirable skills they look for. By elevating the importance of co-curricular experiences, employers will be encouraged to use these experiences as an indicator of skills they look for—a factor that employers may not be focusing on. Currently, the rhetoric suggests that many students either do not have the necessary transferable skills that employers look for, or are unable to articulate those skills (Harris Interactive Public Relations Research, 2013; Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990; Wente, 2013). Concurrently, employers are increasingly looking for those transferable soft skills (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2008; Canadian Council of Chief Executives, 2014). If students and recent graduates are unable to articulate those skills, then this perpetuates the rhetoric that there is a “skills gap”. When in fact, this may not necessarily be a skills gap, but rather the lack of articulation of those skills. Thus, the CCR is intended to fill the gap, by providing the language for both students and employers to recognize the development of soft skills.
Give the current climate that emphasizes universities’ role in human capital development, postsecondary institutions can benefit from this study since it explores the role and value of co-curricular engagement and the CCR in the hiring process. This includes employer perceptions of the quality of students/recent graduates that are entering the workforce, and helps identify the role that institutions can play to facilitate this process. Universities and colleges are investing resources and money to develop and implement the CCR, and can benefit from learning if the CCR has the potential to be incorporated in the hiring process and be valued by employers. With this, knowledge mobilization of the CCR and the role it can play, can elevate the program as a whole by emphasizing its importance to multiple stakeholders.

This study is also significant for government officials, policymakers, and arms-length organizations that focus on the success of postsecondary institutions. For example, recent reports from the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) and the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU) have articulated the importance of skill-development at the postsecondary level and the role of experiential learning and work-integrated learning opportunities (Council of Ontario Universities, 2014a; Council of Ontario Universities, 2014b; Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, 2013). The CCR directly influences a number of the MTCU priorities outlined in the Results-based Plan Book (2013-2014), including: encouraging a holistic education and developing job-ready skills, transforming the postsecondary education system to meet the needs of the innovation economy, fostering a culture of training and continuous learning, informing students about career options, tracking outcomes for students over time, and encouraging minority populations to develop skills. The CCR can be part of a provincial and national strategy to help advance some of these goals, and to reinforce the importance of experiential learning opportunities and the development of transferable skills through a well-rounded educational experience.
This study addresses a gap in the knowledge with respect to employer perceptions of co-curricular engagement and the CCR in the hiring process. Do employers look at co-curricular engagement when hiring? Would they welcome the addition of a new document? This study explores some of these questions and assumptions.

1.5 Assumptions

This research study is rooted in the assumption that respondents understand a number of concepts and terms. For example, respondents are asked to rate the importance of factors in the hiring process, such as extracurricular engagement and social profile. This assumes that they understand what extracurricular engagement is, and which section in the resume or interview highlight this category. Secondly, when asked to select competencies that they look for, this assumes that respondents understand the definitions of the presented competencies, such as design thinking and fostering inclusivity and equity. The extent to which employers understand these terms influences how they responded.

1.6 Researcher’s Relationship to the Study

In the pursuit of my academic interests, I entered the MA program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education to explore the impact of co-curricular engagement on student learning and development. This interest narrowed in on exploring the impact of the Co-Curricular Record as a tool to encourage engagement and foster student learning and development at postsecondary institutions. At this time, the University of Toronto was discussing the adoption of the Co-Curricular Record. I was invited to participate in these early discussions, and was then hired as the Coordinator, Co-Curricular Record to lead the development and implementation of the program.
Through intimately engaging with the development and promotion of the CCR and connecting with colleagues across Canada, I realized the importance of exploring the extent to which the CCR can be utilized in the hiring process. A significant number of institutions were arguing that the CCR is a valuable tool that can be used in the hiring process, however, there was no relevant and current research to support these claims. While some institutions had explored employer interest through small-scale surveys or focus groups, there was no academic literature that assessed the potential impact and role of the CCR in the hiring process.

Throughout the development and implementation of the CCR at the University of Toronto, I connected with a few other professionals to form the CCR Professional Network in fall of 2012. The purpose of this network is to provide a space to share best practices, research, and to advance the CCR at a provincial and national level. This network organically grew from a small handful of professionals, to over 117 professionals from over 55 Canadian postsecondary institutions. Through this network, we began to discuss the need of gathering the network to identify standards and guidelines that we could work towards. I then led the organization of and hosted the first national CCR Summit in Canada, with 60 professionals from over 43 universities and colleges. I actively seek to promote the CCR, while avidly trying to bring institutions together to work in a concerted and coordinated effort.

This thesis is written from the perspective of the three roles that I hold: master’s student, coordinator of the initiative at U of T, and promoter of the Canada-wide movement.

1.8 Organization of Thesis

The following chapters will develop the argument presented in this thesis—the CCR can act as a translation tool, where it helps students identify and articulate soft skills they have developed, and provides a validated record that demonstrates the possession of soft skills to
employers. The narrative of Chapter 2 follows some of the key themes and ideas presented in the literature. First, it explores the purpose of an education and the challenges that have ensued, followed by literature that examines what employers look for in the hiring process. The benefits of co-curricular engagement, and institutional programming that supports student learning and development, such as e-portfolios and CCRs, are then discussed. Through this discussion, I hone in on the benefits of co-curricular engagement as it pertains to developing soft skills that may be of interest in the hiring process. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in this study, including the research design, participant selection, data collection, instrument design, and limitations to the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study, broken down into three key areas: candidate materials and hiring factors, competencies and skills, and the Co-Curricular Record. Building on the literature review and the results, Chapter 5 discusses the findings from the study and its connection to the literature, outlines conclusions, identifies implications for policy and practice, proposes recommendations, and suggests avenues for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

I explore a wide variety of topics in this literature review. I begin by exploring current rhetoric about the purpose of a postsecondary education, followed by current hiring practices, including candidate materials and factors in the hiring process. This will include competencies and skills that employers look for, along with the weaknesses of candidates that employers have identified. I then explore the benefits of co-curricular engagement on student learning and development, and demonstrate how these experiences can provide the opportunity for students to develop the competencies and skills that employers look for. This will provide the basis for the rationale of why universities and college have developed Co-Curricular Record programs in North America, along with a discussion about the differences between CCRs and e-portfolios.

2.2 Purpose of an Education and the Job Skills “Gap”

What is the purpose of a university education? For Cardinal Newman (1873/1982), academic and leader of the Oxford movement, the university should promote a liberal education. To him, university is a place where students are exposed to a wealth of subjects and encouraged to think critically, engaging them in meaningful discussion among peers and faculty (Newman, 1873/1982). While the institution promotes a liberal education, there has been pressure to shift focus over the years. There has been a lot of rhetoric in the media about the perceived skills gap and youth unemployment/underemployment, which has sparked questions about the purpose and value of a postsecondary education (Deveau, 2015; Pitman, 2014; Hirsh, 2013; Wente, 2013). University of Toronto philosophy professor Mark Kingwell (2011) argues that many university administrators are pushing a “pragmatism” (para. 6) of higher education, and students are pursuing a university education in order to “get a good job” (para. 7). With tuition fees
skyrocketing over the last few decades, parents “are looking for a return on investment” on their child’s university education (Kingwell, 2011, para. 6). Students are pursuing postsecondary education as a means to an end, rather than an intellectual journey.

To what extent should postsecondary institutions be focused on employability skills and preparation for the labour market? The academic institution is meant to spark intellectual conversation, provide space for the exploration and critical analysis of ideas and the development of competencies, such as critical thinking and communication. While the academic institution is not intended to act as “job training” for particular industries, it is intended to provide a robust and well-rounded academic experience, which allows for the development of competencies that can be transferable to the job market. Newman (1873/1982) and Hirsh (2013) are just a few that describe how a university education is intended to develop the whole student, and to foster skills such as critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills. While it does not correlate to a particular job, it is intended to lay the foundation that can be nurtured and fostered in a variety of settings. It is the foundation of those skills that are important in supporting and advancing an economy.

A postsecondary education plays an influential role in the economy, and compared to other nations, Canada excels in its percentage of the population holding credentials. Of those aged 24-64, 51% of Canadians hold a university or college degree or diploma in 2011—compared to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 32% (OECD, 2013). With this, data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) showed that 64.1% have some level of postsecondary qualification, which is nearly a 4% increase since 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2011). These statistics demonstrate the value society places on educational qualifications, and the importance of credentials in the labour market. Despite these
numbers, there have been debates about the purpose of an education, and the role it plays in producing job-ready graduates.

The “skills gap”—a phrase often used and debated by a number of research studies and editorial comments—refers to the gap between the skills of candidates and the skills required in the job market. The Conference Board of Canada (2014) found that 73% of employers say skills requirements have increased over the past decade, and there is a “misalignment between the number of postsecondary graduates in Ontario, their subject areas, and employers’ needs.” With this, they claim that this skills gap costs the economy up to $24.3 billion in forgone GDP (Conference Board of Canada, 2014). In the Canada 2020 paper series, Principal Research Associate for the Conference Board of Canada and university Lecturer Daniel Munro (2014) examines questions of excellence (is Canada producing graduates with the right skills?) and equity (is the distribution of skills across regions and groups equal?). Looking at essential skills in a 2013 survey of 1500 Ontario employers sampled, over 70% reported gaps in the critical thinking and problem-solving skills of candidates and current employees, and 46% identified gaps in oral communication skills and 42% for literacy skills. From this data, Munro (2014) argues that not only are graduates not developing the right skills, but also there is an unequal distribution across groups—including a large gap between Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal, men and women, and immigrants. Postsecondary institutions play a critical role in providing opportunities for skill development, and Munro (2014) argues for some policy options, including the creation of a National Learning Outcomes Assessment Program, which would measure the skills students develop and the role that postsecondary institutions play in the development. Munro also suggests creating a Canadian Council on Skills and Higher Education, which would encourage the sharing of knowledge, reporting on learning and skills outcomes, conducting and sharing
research, and convening meetings and summits. This report demonstrates a need to focus on skill
development both within and beyond the postsecondary institution.

Recent reports have found that despite the criticisms of a university education, there are
tangible benefits for its graduates, including securing employment and earning potential. In
February 2014, the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) published *University Works*—a report
that analyzes data from Ontario’s Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and Statistics
Canada, and highlights trends of university graduates, including unemployment rates, earnings,
and work related to program of study. The report highlights that while the unemployment rate is
currently 16% for 15 to 24 year olds, university graduates represent a small portion of this
statistic. For earnings, university graduates average an income of $65,676 in 2010, which is 54%
more than their college counterparts, and more than twice the amount of high school graduates.
University graduates were also 73% more likely to find work closely or somewhat closely related
to their program of study, versus 66% of college graduates. The *University Works* report
highlights the value of a university education, in terms of employment, earnings, and field of
work—by comparing it to other levels of degrees (Council of Ontario Universities, 2014b). With
this, the Canadian Education Statistics Council (2012) found that during tough economic times,
those with higher levels of education were affected the least. Therefore, the rhetoric of youth
underemployment/unemployment applies to university graduates to a lesser extent than other
youth with a different degree or level of study.

One group that is very interested in the return of investment of a university education, are
Success,” a global consumer research study that explores the “hopes and aspiration that parents
around the world have of education.” In this, they found that 89% of parents want their children
to go to university, and 43% say the ability to compete in the workplace is a key expectation of a good university education, followed by income earning potential (37%), and access to opportunities in life (34%) and vocational/professional training (34%). Parents identified that universities provide a credential that is valued by the job market, and provides certain unique opportunities and earning potential (HSBC, 2014)—statistics that are supported by reports such as *University Works*.

Comparing the sentiments provided by students, the RBC Student Finances Poll found that while the majority of postsecondary students saw value in their education, “more college students (92 per cent) say their education gives them an advantage and puts them on a level playing field in the job market compared to their university peers (87 per cent)” (Royal Bank of Canada, 2013). The poll also found that 81 per cent of university graduates see postsecondary education as a stepping-stone to higher study, compared to 70 per cent of college students” (Royal Bank of Canada, 2013). This suggests that university students see the value of a degree beyond securing a job, and see university as a journey of higher learning and development. This journey is intended to provide a holistic experience of learning and development, rather than acquiring knowledge for a particular industry.

Engagement in higher education yields a breadth of outcomes. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) released a report written by Lindsay DeClou (2014) titled, “Social Returns: Assessing the benefits of higher education.” In this, DeClou argues that there is a positive correlation between a postsecondary education, and being more civically engaged—both volunteering and charitable giving—compared to high school graduates. The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) has published, *UniversityWorks*, a website which highlights stories of recent university graduates speaking to how their education impacted their
success. For example, Nick Iannitti, Anne Claude, and Rahul Sudarshan describe how their degree helped them develop communication and analytical skills, which have served them well in their career pursuits. The website is intended to highlight how an education can foster a sense of learning and development, that positively impacts one’s career path (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2013). Students are not only acquiring knowledge of particular field, but also developing a range of skills that are applicable in various career pursuits. In the Globe and Mail, economist Todd Hirsch (2013) wrote a letter to students, reminding that: “Your degree was never intended to land you a job.” A program of study does not translate into a particular field or job—a university degree is intended to help students be a complete thinker and develop skills that are transferable in any field or job. The purpose of university education is not job training, but to learn how to think—to learn and make sense of complex concepts and structure reasoned arguments (Hirsh, 2013). These studies and arguments, among others, demonstrate the value of a well-rounded academic education. The goal of providing a balanced educational experience is supported by the employer perspective, where there is a desire for a balance of skills and knowledge.

Employers look for well-rounded candidates. Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. (2006) conducted a research study on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, which interviewed 305 employers who held executive positions, 510 recent graduates of a four-year college, and held three focus groups among business executives. The priorities for a college education that employers identified match those of the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP): 1) integrative learning, 2) knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, 3) intellectual and practical skills, and 4) personal and social responsibility. The majority of employers and recent graduates felt that a postsecondary education should “provide a balance of a well-rounded
education and knowledge and skills in a specific field,”—with only 22% of employers and 13% of recent graduates preferring a focus on knowledge and skills in a specific field. With this, 73% of employers acknowledged that education plays a “very important” role in the nation’s ability to compete in the global economy, with 22% selecting “fairly important” (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., 2006). These results highlight employers’ belief in a well-rounded education, and the critical role education plays in helping shape job-ready graduates and the economy.

There is support for a well-rounded education, and the reality that employers are invested in the preparedness of recent graduates’ for the labour market. Of the Canadian Chief Executives and Entrepreneurs surveyed by the CCCE (2014), roughly 60% of respondents stated that they are largely satisfied with the preparedness of recent college and university graduates. This is largely due to the recruitment efforts and partnerships with postsecondary institutions. However, there were roughly 25% respondents that were neutral or dissatisfied with the preparedness of recent graduates (Canadian Council of Chief Executives, 2014). This study demonstrates, that while in theory there is support of a well-rounded education, there are recent graduates that are entering the workforce with a lack of tangible skills and/or specific industry knowledge.

The imminent debate about the looming “skills gap” is inconclusive; and there is a debate about whether there is skills gap, a skills mismatch, or gap in students’ ability to articulate skills they developed. In her Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded study, University of Guelph Professor Mina Plesca examined the question—is there truly a skills shortage? Plesca argues that in general, there is no evidence of a skills gap, but rather a skills mismatch (Pitman, 2014). Currently, 20-25% of employees are overqualified for their positions, despite the fact that employers argue that they have difficulty finding skilled candidates. Some employers perceive a skills gap, since they are looking for a narrow set of
skills, rather than looking for transferable skills and then providing specific training. With this, Plesca argues that compared to community colleges that focus on teaching specific skills, a four-year university degree teaches students transferable skills that can be used in a variety of jobs and adapt to the changing economy (Pitman, 2014). Therefore, postsecondary institutions and employers are both responsible for providing opportunities for skill development. Universities help students develop skills that can be transferable across industries, while employers can then train and build specific skills required for particular jobs.

To what extent should academic institutions be responsive to employer needs and the changing dynamics of the economy? While institutions try to foster a holistic education with opportunities to develop skills, there is a balance in upholding the values of the academic institution, while preparing students for the labour market. In an opinion piece by Executive Director of the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of B.C., Robert Clift finds it troubling that the B.C. government announced that it plans to “re-engineer” the education system to more closely align with labour market predictions. He noted that reports have found these predictions to be less reliable in the longer term, and that the large majority of students are securing jobs within two years of graduation (Clift, 2014). While society is rapidly changing, postsecondary institutions develop and transform at a much slower rate. For example, Tanyel, Mitchell & McAlum (1999) found that the skills and abilities that employers expect of business school graduates are different than earlier studies. This is because of the changing dynamics of society and the continual reassessment of valued skills and attributes. In the Financial Post, Denise Deveau (2014) explores the changing landscape of manufacturing jobs, and the difficulty in training students with skills that will be relevant once they graduate. While co-ops and internships help this issue to some extent, president and CEO of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Jayson Myers stated “it’s the empirical skills and application of knowledge to practical
work that is so important,” (Deveau, 2014, para. 9). Although a university degree is generally not designed to impart a specific narrow set of skills for the workplace, postsecondary students are interested in how their degree will aid them secure employment after their education. Thus, it is important to understand labour market hiring processes and practices when assisting students in the pursuit of their career interests. The following section highlights some of the candidate materials and hiring factors that have been identified by employers through research studies and anecdotal opinions expressed through the media and reports.

2.3 Candidate Materials & Hiring Factors

With the rhetoric of the job skills gap, this brings up an important question: Which indicators are employers looking at to assess if a candidate possesses the necessary credentials and skills? In the hiring process, employers use materials as indicators of a candidate’s qualifications and focus on various factors when weighing their decision, such as academic credentials, previous work experience, volunteer experience, and references’ feedback. Labour market research and studies have examined the skills and qualifications employers look for, and the level of importance that these factors play in the decision-making process.

2.3a Resume

The resume is the most traditional candidate material required in the hiring process, which is intended to provide an overview of a candidate’s experiences and qualifications. The 2013 Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) Campus Recruitment Report found that the traditional C.V. and cover letter combination is preferred 3:1 over just the C.V. (Smith & Lam, 2013). Service Canada’s Job Bank argues that, “employers will scan a resume for about 30 seconds to decide whether to consider an applicant” (Job Bank, 2011, para. 1). Therefore, it seems imperative that a candidate’s resume be targeted for the particular job and
highlight a candidate’s skills, abilities, and achievements, while being professional in appearance. While the order and categorization of the resume may vary, they often include contact information, career objective, education, work experience, skills, awards/achievements, volunteer work, and interests (Job Bank, 2011). The resume is critical in forming that first impression, and demonstrating at a snapshot level, the degree to which the candidate is qualified. It is the follow up interview that allows the candidate to elaborate on their credentials, while allowing the employer to further examine the depth to which the candidate exhibits desirable skills, such as communication and social intelligence. Due to the high volume of applications that companies often receive, Horn (1988) found that 97.6% of employers preferred the initial contact with an applicant to be their application letter and resume, while only a few percent preferred a personal visit. With this, a study by Schullery, Ickes, & Schullery (2009) found that 7% preferred a paper resume, compared to an electronic format. CACEE also found that only 5% of employers still utilize a hardcopy application, with the majority preferring an online submission (Smith & Lam, 2013). In attempts to engage in efficient processes, it is imperative that candidates succinctly convey their qualifications and abilities, and have the appropriate materials available in electronic format. It is when a candidate captures the attention of the employer that they will seek other avenues to help determine the quality of the candidate, such as extending an interview and/or turning to social media.

2.3b Social Media

The increased presence of social media has extended its sphere of influence into the hiring and job search arena. There are number of research studies that examine the extent to which social media is utilized in the hiring process. The Career Advisory Board Job Preparedness Indicator survey found that half of hiring managers and jobseekers indicated social
networking sites as crucial tools to network in order to find desirable jobs (Harris Interactive Public Relations Research, 2013). Sites like LinkedIn can help recruiters and hiring managers seek potential candidates, without having to go through traditional job postings. By recruiting potential candidates and initiating contact through social media channels, employers can take a proactive approach at shaping their candidate pool based on qualifications and credentials they are looking for.

Alternatively, employers use social media to validate information presented on the resume or in the interview. In the 2012 Future Trends Survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers’ (NACE), 90.7% of employers used Facebook in the job search process (Staples, 2013). This statistic demonstrates the high usage of social media to inform hiring decisions. The hiring process can be subject to deception and exaggeration, and social media can be used to expose false information or confirm claims presented. Guillory & Hancock (2012) found that “compared with traditional resume, LinkedIn resumes were less deceptive about prior work experience and responsibilities, but more deceptive about interests and hobbies” (p. 135). This is driven by self-presentational goals, and the desire to appear well-rounded and competent. However, social media can be used to screen candidate’s materials, and compare information presented on the resume with what is online (Guillory & Hancock, 2012). Social media can also be used to explore if candidates have particular skills that employers look for, such as communication and professionalism. A candidate’s social profile can provide a fuller picture of a candidate’s demeanor and qualifications, since it demonstrates how they present themselves in a more personal context.

However, the use of social media has its implications—both ethical and professional. Lory (2010) describes how the large presence of social-networking sites, such as Facebook,
raises the question of ethics in this process, given the fact that using Facebook to screen candidates is currently unregulated. This creates the potential for discrimination against candidates, either conscious or subconscious (Lory, 2010). With this, there has been information found through social media sites that has negatively impacted a candidate’s chances. In a survey conducted by Cheng (2009), “more than a third of respondents said they found info that caused them not to hire the person applying for the job,” (para. 3) including photographs, content related to illegal activity, badmouthing employers, or discovering false qualifications. In the 2010 Student Survey conducted by NACE, less than a third of senior students felt that employers should look at the applicant’s Facebook profile when hiring (Lory, 2010). Yet, research reveals the prevalence that social media has started to play in the job market—both in its recruitment efforts and role in the decision making process. This demonstrates the need for postsecondary institutions to educate students on the role their social profile plays, and the importance to craft a professional and truthful representation of their experiences and skills.

Employers review the resume and social media to determine if they will offer interviews to their most desirable candidates. The following sub-sections review factors that employers use to screen in the hiring process, including grades and skills in demand.

2.3c Grades

Examining indicators that employers use to identify desirable skills, research demonstrates the limited role that the Grade Point Average (GPA) plays in hiring decisions. The GPA is defined as the “weighted sums of the grade points earned,” and can be calculated by adding up the grades of the courses (taking into account the weighted value of the course), and dividing the total grades by the number of total credits (University of Toronto, n.d.). The use of
the Grade Point Average (GPA) during the hiring process varies depending on the industry, with some not requiring the GPA and others using it in the initial screening.

In the hiring process, if the GPA is taken into consideration, it is often used in the initial screening process. In the 2009 Job Outlook study conducted by NACE, the most influential factor on employers’ hiring decision was a students’ major, with leadership and previous work experience ranked second—the GPA was often used as an initial cutoff (Causer, 2009). The GPA provides a limited amount of information, and employers do not often place a large emphasis on GPA beyond using it as an initial screen. There are a number of studies that echoed this argument, and the limited use of the GPA. McKinney, Carlson, Mecham III, D’Angelo & Connerley (2003) used data from 548 college job postings to examine the relationship between GPA and initial screening decisions. There were 42% of recruiters that did not utilize GPA in the screening decision, and of those that did, 14% did not select candidates with a high GPA. The GPA may be used as an initial cutoff, but past that cutoff, research has found that it is rarely a deciding factor (Brown & Campion, 1994; Hutchinson & Brefka, 1997; Posner, 1981; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). CACEE found that academic performance was ranked the least valuable as a pre-screening criteria, with the degree/diploma ranked the most valuable, followed by program of study, work integrated learning, and co-curricular involvement (Smith & Lam, 2013).

The GPA provides limited information. President and founder of CollegeRecruiter.com, Steven Rothberg, argued that GPA is a contributing factor in the hiring process, but experience and networking often play a more influential role (University Wire, 2014). Rivera (2011) went so far to note that grades are often “distrusted” by employers, since the grading of GPA can vary across institution, and many do not equate a GPA to intelligence. The use of grades as an initial cutoff, is often a flexible rather than rigid, and varies based on employer and industry. Rivera
(2011) noted that grade discounts were often taken into consideration with students who demonstrated a high level of commitment, such as varsity athletes. This suggests that the GPA provides a limited lens in which candidates can be assessed by, and that employers do not necessarily view the GPA as an indicator of the desirable skills.

2.3d Skills in Demand

The resume, interview, and social media are used in the hiring process to help employers make a well-informed decision about a candidate’s skills, qualifications, personality, and fit with the position and organization. While a number of reports, studies, and opinions highlight the skills employers look for in the hiring process, the challenge with comparing these studies is that they use different language, ask different questions, and have different methodology. However, some of the most cited skills include communication, leadership, problem solving, teamwork, social intelligence, and interpersonal skills. Employers will often look to previous work experience, extracurricular, and volunteer work for evidence of these skills.

A number of surveys conducted in the 1980s found communication, leadership, and other soft skills as the most important attributes they look for in the hiring process. Haffer & Hoth (1980) surveyed business students and national firms, asking them to rank attributes based on their level of importance. The attributes that employers ranked the highest were soft skills that provide the basis for potential—such as communication, leadership, and enthusiasm. McKendrick (1986) found similar skills as most important, and identified a candidate’s inability to communicate clearly and lack of preparation as the largest problems with a candidate’s interview. Boatwright & Stamps (1988) found that a candidate’s academic skills were noted as less important than being a self-starter, or having leadership and communication skills. Kelley & Gaedeke (1990) found that employers and students surveyed also found personality traits,
communication, and technical skills (e.g. problem solving and computer skills) as the most important criteria in the hiring process.

More recent studies from the turn of the 21st century reaffirm the importance of teamwork, communication, leadership, and other soft skills. The 2013 Campus Recruitment Report found that the top 5 characteristics employers look for in candidates are: communication skills (verbal), teamwork skills, analytical skills, strong work ethic, and problem-solving skills. These results were consistent with the 2011 and 2012 results, just presented in a different order (Smith & Lam, 2013). The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) 2008 Job Outlook survey of 276 employers found that communication skills, strong work ethic, teamwork, initiative and interpersonal skills were the top attributes employers look for in the hiring process. The 305 interviews conducted on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, found that business executives selected teamwork skills, critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills, and communication skills as the most important skills they look for in new hires (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., 2006). In the “Hiring Trends 2003” survey, one-third of employers ranked “work experience” as the most influencing factor in the decision-making process (CareerBuilder.com, 2003). The second factor was professional behavior, and fit with company culture and recommendation from an employee within the company was tied for third.

Other studies note the importance of emotional intelligence, multi-tasking, initiative, and creativity. The Boston Globe’s journalist Erica Noonan (2006) argued the employers are looking for well-rounded candidates who can demonstrate emotional intelligence. This includes soft skills such as self-awareness, social intelligence, stress management, time management, and empathy. Noonan (2006) references research conducted by the Consortium of Research on
Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, which demonstrated that those with higher emotional intelligence outperformed and earned more than colleagues with lower scores. In a 2009 survey conducted by CareerBuilder and Robert Half International, employers noted that the most important characteristics (beyond basic qualifications) are multitasking (36%), initiative (31%), and creative thinking (21%) (Zupek, 2009). The Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE) produced a series of reports for Taking Action for Canada: Jobs and Skills for the 21st Century, an initiative intended to bring business, government, and educators to engage Canadian workers, share best practices, and develop solutions (Canadian Council of Chief Executives, 2014).

Representing 150 chief executives and leading entrepreneurs across Canada, CCCE surveyed its members about their human resource and skills needs. In response to what they look for when hiring, respondents highlighted the importance of soft skills over hard skills—such as people skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, analytical abilities, and leadership skills (Canadian Council of Chief Executives, 2014). While 72% of respondents look for less than 2 years of relevant full-time experience, several noted that co-op and work-integrated learning experiences count towards this experience requirement. The Career Advisory Board Job Preparedness Indicator survey received 507 responses from adults looking for work (“job seekers”) and 500 employers responsible for hiring (“hiring managers”). Hiring managers ranked a number of skills they looking for, with the top five (in order): strong base work ethic, ability to work with others, self-motivated/initiative, flexibility, good time management skills. Looking at the hiring of recent postsecondary graduates, roughly 20-25% of hiring managers expressed that recent graduates do not know how to promote themselves in interviews and resumes, and do not display strong interpersonal skills and communication in interviews (Harris Interactive Public Relations Research, 2013). When ranking the importance of various factors, 79% of hiring managers selected evidence of basic skills as important, 50% for educational
background, 23% for directly related experience, 40% for references, and 36% for volunteering or internship experience. With this, “nearly nine in ten said that transferable skills is often the deciding factor in the hiring decision” (Harris Interactive Public Relations Research, 2013, p.89).

Despite the importance and focus on skills, some studies argue that there is lack of qualified candidates. A survey conducted found that only one in six hiring managers “believe most or nearly all job seekers have the skills and traits their company is looking for in a candidate” (Harris Interactive Public Relations Research, 2013). A survey conducted by Kelley & Gaedeke (1990) found that the greatest weakness of marketing graduates included: communication skills (44%) and unrealistic expectations of pay, abilities, and the business world (33%). These two studies highlight some of the common sentiments heard in the media, about the lack of job-ready graduates and the skills gap (Howcroft, 2013; Flavelle, 2014; Wente, 2013). Employers are looking for the evidence of skills when hiring, such as communication, and rely on the candidate to demonstrate these skills in the hiring process.

Studies have examined what is important to highlight on a resume to demonstrate the evidence of desirable skills, such as relevant experience. While employers often look at previous work experience, Crosby & Liming (2009) argued that relevant volunteer activities, internships, and school projects should be highlighted—especially if an applicant does not have extensive relevant work experience. This includes school involvement in extracurricular activities, such as student government, organizations and community involvement. Crosby & Liming (2009) argued that these opportunities demonstrate skills that employers look for, including hard work and leadership skills. In an article geared for teens, Rowh (2007) offers similar sentiments, by acknowledging that extracurricular engagement can highlight skills on a resume, and are important in the hiring process. However, what is not clear in the literature is to what extent
extracurricular opportunities are viewed by hiring managers as valuable experiences that demonstrate acquired skills and competencies.

These studies, among others, highlight the importance and desire for transferable skills in the hiring process, such as communication, leadership, problem solving, and teamwork. Some studies have noted that employers are dissatisfied with the quality of candidates, and their difficulty to communicate relevant skills. With this, employers will often focus on previous work experience (and may take into consideration extracurricular engagement) for the demonstration of these skills.

2.4 Changing Nature of Postsecondary Education

Acknowledging the importance of skills in the hiring process, and employer dissatisfaction with the demonstration of those skills from recent graduates, there has been an emphasis on a more holistic and experiential university experience. This emphasis has occurred at a local to international level, with governments, policymakers, and postsecondary institutions discussing the ways in which to make a postsecondary education more relevant for the labour market.

This has influenced the changing nature of career centres. There has been a movement away from one-on-one resume critiques at the end of a student’s degree, to a focus on career exploration and education throughout a student’s degree. This includes providing experiential learning opportunities (both curricular and co-curricular), workshops on career exploration, career education, and connecting students with employers and alumni (Rothenberg, Lewandowski, Zauner, Miller & Jin, 2012). Career centres are leveraging and expanding their alumni mentor networks, connecting with industries and employers, customizing recruiting activities, and leveraging these partnerships to provide opportunities for students (Rothenberg et
al., 2012). The shifting culture across career centres demonstrates the changing nature of labour market needs, and the desire for well-rounded and job-ready graduates.

There has been a recent push at the provincial level to focus on experiential learning and work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities. Released March 2014, the Council of Ontario Universities published a report about experiential learning titled, “Bringing Life to Learning at Ontario Universities” (Council of Ontario Universities, 2014a). The report claims that the National Graduates Survey shows “bachelor’s level graduates with co-op experience earn more than their peers, have higher employment and full-time employment rates, and are more likely to have paid off their debt two years after graduation” (p. 12). Work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities provide students with career development opportunities through internships, co-op programs, community service learning and placements, and work opportunities (Council of Ontario Universities, 2014a). The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) echoed the importance of WIL, and is calling for the expansion of WIL opportunities, especially to students in underrepresented disciplines (i.e. arts, humanities, social sciences, and hard sciences) and marginalized populations, since current opportunities are often benefiting some students over others (Bristow, 2014). Relevant work experience and soft skills are often cited as very important in the hiring process, and experiential learning opportunities can provide this experience and skill development.

There has been an increased emphasis on the importance of experiential learning opportunities from both government and postsecondary institutions. Minister of the MTCU, Brad Duguid, stated, “Ontario’s postsecondary institutions are global leaders in offering innovative applied learning programs that combine traditional classroom teaching methods with hands-on, collaborative activities that help students learn in new ways. These experiential learning courses
help our students develop the valuable practical skills that many employers are seeking and help these students to actively contribute to our highly skilled, 21st century global economy” (Council of Ontario Universities, 2014a, p. 14). The report extensively describes a wide range of experiential learning opportunities in universities across Ontario, including the University of Waterloo’s extensive co-op program, an interdisciplinary course that includes a study abroad opportunity at Western University, and academic service learning courses at the University of Toronto. The report argues that work-integrated learning programs are beneficial for both students and employers, since it provides students with invaluable work experience, and creates job-ready graduates (Council of Ontario Universities, 2014a).

At an international level, there have been a series of conversations about the ways in which an educational degree can reflect transferable skills. The Bologna Process brought together 29 European countries to form an agreement that sought to develop standards and quality across the higher education sector, which would allow for the ease of travel across nations (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2009). Now involving 46 countries and influencing others, the Bologna Process and subsequent Lisbon Recognition Convention, brought the development of the Diploma Supplement (DS)—a document that provides information about the credential to improve international transparency. The DS provides a “standardised description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by its holder” (European Commission, 2014, para. 1). The benefits for students include a precise and objective description of competencies acquired. Similarly, Australian institutions developed the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS), a certified document that highlights educational qualifications, and intended to “make Australian qualifications recognized and renowned throughout the world” (Australian Government, 2014). The creation of these documents highlight international attempts at demonstrating the value and transferable nature of
the knowledge and competencies developed. This discussion has also entered the Canadian sphere, but the realm of discussion has focused more highlighting and describing co-curricular experiences—for this reason (among others), institutions have been encouraging a more robust educational experience by promoting the importance of co-curricular opportunities.

These efforts at the local, provincial, national, and international level are intended to demonstrate the value of an education – both in terms of subject knowledge as well as transferable hard and soft skills—and the credential acts as an indicator of competencies students’ developed. Occurring at an institutional level, Canadian universities and colleges have organically began to develop the Co-Curricular Record, which acts as a tool to help students find opportunities and articulate the transferable skills developed through co-curricular engagement. Similar to the Diploma Supplement and Higher Education Graduation Statement, the CCR provides an official validated record. Unlike the other two, the CCR captures opportunities beyond the classroom, including student leadership and campus life activities. At some institutions that have a CCR, career educators have begun to play an important role in promoting and using the CCR in current practices, such as integrating the record in appointments, using the database to help students find opportunities, and using the record to help students translate their experiences (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). Work-integrated learning and experiential learning opportunities are two prominent examples of co-curricular activities, which COU’s Bringing Life To Learning report argues impacts student success with job attainment. The following sections examine the literature that demonstrates the benefits of student engagement, along with programs that institutions have implemented to encourage and support engagement, such as e-portfolios and the Co-Curricular Record.
2.5 Benefits of Student Engagement

There is a wealth of literature that provides conceptual and empirical evidence that supports the benefits of student engagement in co-curricular activities. There are a number of benefits, including impact on the student experience, satisfaction, and retention rates, along with opportunity for personal and professional development. A number of theoretical frameworks and arguments have been used to demonstrate the correlation between student engagement and its impact on student success—three of the most prominent being Alexander Astin’s theory of involvement, Arthur W. Chickering’s theory of identity development, and Vincent Tinto’s retention theory. These three prominent theories underpin the justification for developing programs that encourage engagement in co-curricular opportunities, since they highlight the positive impact of engagement on student development, success, and retention.

A students’ investment in their educational journey, influences their learning and development. Astin’s (1993 & 1999) theory of involvement argues,

*Student involvement* refers to the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience. Such involvement takes many forms, such as absorption in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel. According to the theory, the greater the student’s involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of student learning and personal development. (Astin, 1999, p. 528-529)

This investment of energy is important in influencing students’ success, and thus the educational journey should be holistic, where students’ engagement with curricular and co-curricular opportunities enhances the depth and breadth of experiences that shapes an individuals’ developmental journey. This engagement and investment of time and energy is important for the learning and development process, and thus emphasis should be placed on a well-rounded educational experience. The role of the institution is to offer opportunities for growth and
development, both curricular and co-curricular, which also foster relations between students and the staff/faculty of the institution. However, while Astin’s theory of involvement provides a justification for involvement, this needs to be supported by the campus environment and its various stakeholders. This includes staff, faculty, and students acknowledging that involvement is integral to student success.

Chickering’s (1969) theory of identity development argues that students go through a series of seven stages of development, including: developing competence, managing emotions, and moving through autonomy towards independence. Storey (2010) argues that this theory suggests that involvement in institutional opportunities can help students realize their identity, which aids in their growth and development. Self-awareness is important in the job search process, since it helps students identify and articulate the skills and qualifications they bring to a job. Institutions can foster this identity development by supporting intentional opportunities for development, and encouraging a culture of reflective practice to help students identify and articulate their growth.

The theoretical frameworks presented by Astin and Chickering underpin a number of research studies that have found empirical evidence to support that there are benefits of co-curricular engagement—including the development of skills and increased sense of self-awareness. In their mixed-method study, Burt et al. (2011) found that students who were involved demonstrated greater leadership skills, were more thoughtful in their ethical decisions, and were better able to articulate the benefits from their involvement. Haber & Komives (2009) found that it was the student-student interaction that played a significant influence on leadership development, and that involved students were better able to develop a purpose, lifestyle planning, and life management. Kezar & Moriarty (2000) found a modest and positive impact
on senior students’ self-reported leadership skills and ability to influence others. Elliott (2009) surveyed 94 students who were involved in formalized institutional programs, and 96 students who were not involved across three public community colleges in central Kansas. She found that students who were engaged in postsecondary co-curricular activities had a higher GPA, were more satisfied with their college experience, more self-confident, better able to manage emotions, and were more emotionally independent from their parents. These findings support Chickering’s theory, whereby students develop competence, manage emotions, develop purpose, are more self-aware of their identity, and able to make meaning of their experience. With this, these findings support Astin’s theory of involvement by demonstrating how involvement in co-curricular opportunities impacts a student’s development and success. Along with the concrete benefits that students gain through their engagement, studies and theories have also found co-curricular engagement influences retention and graduation rates – two measures of great interest to most postsecondary institutions.

Embedded in Tinto’s (1987) retention theory is the argument that the more integrated the student is with the fabric of the institution, the more likely they are to persist until degree completion. Without this integration, students feel at odds with the institution and become isolated. Integration in this instance, refers to a student’s connection with their peers, faculty, staff, which can be facilitated through engagement in curricular and co-curricular opportunities. By being connected, students learn about the resources and supports available to them at the institution, while establishing a circle of support. This includes peer-programming and support (both formal and informal), academic advising and support, counseling and resources for distinct populations (Tinto, 1987). This integration can occur through a number of avenues, and there is no single prescribed path. What is important is that students subscribe to one form of membership—whether it is through their program, department, faculty, student club, residence
life, or other campus communities. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) cite Tinto’s retention theory as likely the most widely used framework guiding the analyses of persistence, and Braxton & Hirschy (2004) estimate that there have been 775 citations.

A wealth of literature has examined the impact of engagement (academic and social) on student persistence. Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson (1997) found moderate to strong evidence that engagement had a positive effect on persistence—a finding that others have also found through various studies (Astin, 1993; Horn, 1998; Thomas, 2000). The foundation of Tinto’s theory has helped frame a number of these studies, as it demonstrates the correlation between different factors (such as engagement) and persistence. Astin (1993) suggests that integration with the institution can critically impact students’ decisions to persist, and involvement can positively influence a student’s development and success. Theories and research studies have extensively examined the relationship between student engagement and persistence, and while there are varying degrees of correlations that have been found, the data strongly suggests that there is a positive correlation. Astin’s theory of involvement, Chickering’s theory of identity development, and Tinto’s retention theory all provide the basis for the claim that there are benefits of co-curricular engagement on student development, retention, and success. These theories are critical frameworks that student affairs professionals use in developing co-curricular programming. These programs are rooted in the belief that involvement yields benefits, and that students develop important competencies through that engagement.

Acknowledging the benefits of student engagement, both curricular and co-curricular, some postsecondary institutions have promoted e-portfolios as a means for students to track their engagement and articulate what they have learned as a result of their curricular and/or co-curricular engagement. An e-portfolio, or electronic portfolio, is an online collection of a
student’s learning both inside and outside of the classroom. As a tool for career planning and
development, Reese & Levy (2009) describes e-portfolios as a comprehensive outline of a
student’s academic and extracurricular involvement, along with self-reflection and supporting
evidence that can then be marketed to potential employers.

2.6 E-portfolios

The development of e-portfolios, and the institutional desire to encourage student
engagement, stems from criticisms of higher education. There are critics of the American higher
education system, targeting its quality and utility, and who argue that students are not developing
critical competencies, including communication, critical thinking, and social responsibility
(Knight, Hakel, & Gromko, 2006). E-portfolios demonstrate learning and the transferable skills
that students are developing throughout their educational career. The desire to increase
institutional credibility and satisfaction contributes to the attraction towards e-portfolios, and
Reese & Levy (2009) argued that e-portfolios are a response to a “new era of accountability” (p. 3).
There was an increasing popularity of tracking and assessing student learning through a
portfolio in the 1990s. This has continued through the 2000s, where many American and
international institutions have created and encouraged students to develop their individual e-
portfolio.

E-portfolios encourage students to be reflective and intentional about their learning,
including how they are presenting themselves, and how they would like to be presented. Hewett
(2004) highlighted three primary reasons for creating an e-portfolio: 1) documenting students’
progress, 2) prompting students’ to acknowledge and reflect on the quality of their learning, and
3) presenting students’ accomplishments in an accessible way. This electronic platform allows
students to select and tailor their e-portfolio for various audiences (Becta, 2007), which requires
students to reflect on the particular skills needed for a specific audience. This process prompts students to be intentional about their experiences and learning, and how they are presenting themselves to an audience. Chau & Cheng (2010) outlines three phases of the e-portfolio: planning, monitoring, and reflecting. Students first set their intended goals, use the e-portfolio to monitor their progress towards those goals, and then reflect on their gaps and revise their goals or adopt new strategies. Banta, Griffin, Flateby & Kahn (2009) argues that this process can encourage students to take ownership of their personal and professional development, whereby reflecting on their experiences allow students to identify their own learning processes. Launched in 2002, Florida State University (FSU) has developed a successful e-portfolio culture, and found that, “Eighty-two percent strongly agreed or agreed that the CPP helped [students] show evidence of skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment” (Lumsden, 2007, p. 57). The e-portfolio helps students make meaning of their experience, by providing a tool that prompts reflective practice and increases self-awareness.

Coupled with its benefits, e-portfolios are accessible—in their creation and their dissemination. In their study, Conole, De Laat, & Dillon (2008) argues that e-portfolios use the technological interface in which students prefer. This electronic interface has a skills matrix, which allows students to peruse opportunities and learn about career-related skills (Garis, 2007). Students have the ease of searching activities and recording their learning, in an accessible and easy manner. Conversely, potential employers or graduate schools can receive access from students to view their portfolio in an easy-to-read and organized electronic format (Banta et al., 2009). The e-portfolio platform thus provides an easy platform—from its creation to its dissemination.
While there are many similarities that can be drawn between the e-portfolio platform and the Co-Curricular Record, there is a fundamental difference. The objectives are similar, including encouraging engagement and providing a forum to prompt the critical reflection of experiences and the transferable skills that can be drawn out and marketed to potential employers and graduate programs. While the e-portfolio recognizes co-curricular involvement, students are free to record whatever they choose. Conversely, the CCR requires that activities must be validated and adhere to a set of criteria before being recorded on the CCR. The list of activities on the CCR is thus held to a more rigorous standard, which is intended to increase the validity of student engagement. Employers and graduate programs can be assured that an institutional representative validated the activities listed on the CCR. With this, an e-portfolio is a more comprehensive in what is included, including student’s academic and extracurricular involvement, and their self-reflection (Reese & Levy, 2009). Thus, the main difference between the two is the level of student control in the development of their record.

2.7 Co-Curricular Record

Many Canadian universities and colleges are developing, or have already adopted, a Co-Curricular Record (CCR) as a means to encourage student engagement in co-curricular activities. A CCR is a formal, institutional document that validates student involvement in eligible co-curricular activities, allowing students to develop, reflect on, and market transferable and employability skills (Elias & Drea, 2013). The CCR demonstrates an institutional commitment to the holistic development of the student by highlighting the importance of engagement in experiential learning opportunities. With this, the CCR values intentionality by placing criteria on the co-curricular activities deemed eligible on the record. These activities must demonstrate active engagement, opposed to passive involvement, and require a level of commitment and learning outcomes (University of Toronto, 2014). Activities that do not adhere to the established
criteria cannot be recognized on the official record. The purpose of these criteria is to maintain a sense of rigour and value of the document. The institutional objective is to encourage engagement that contributes to students’ development, and helping students articulate competencies and skills gained through those experience (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2 2014).

There has been a large uptake in developing and implementing CCRs in Canada in the last decade. Examining the institutional use and value, Bresciani (2005) argues that electronic co-curricular student portfolios can help assess learning outcomes, and demonstrate common institutional learning values. The CCR elevates the importance of co-curricular engagement, and demonstrates a value that has not been so prominently articulated at an institutional level. A “side benefit” that Drolet (2010) highlights is the promotion of a university’s branding. The CCR demonstrates commitment to holistic learning and development, which universities are hoping will act as a recruitment tool. In his research, Hoffman (2002) used developmental transcripts as a marker in his study, since it provides comprehensive data that can be used to describe patterns of student involvement. This highlights one of the benefits of a centralized documented system. The ability to run reports and track engagement provides the institution with meaningful data that can then be used to make policy decisions, and highlight areas of strengths and weaknesses. With this, the CCR acts as a carrot and entices student engagement. Drolet (2010) quotes two administrators who claimed, “Now that [students] know participation in student groups and clubs is recognized, students are keener to be involved.” While are have been anecdotal observations about the CCR and its uptake, little research has assessed the impact of the CCR on student engagement and development.
Examining the benefits to employers, a few anecdotal claims and empirical studies examine the use of the CCR in the hiring process. Drolet (2010) claims that universities are formally recognizing selected co-curricular activities as a response to the needs of the job market. A CCR should emphasize learning outcomes to demonstrate to society the value of well-rounded students and the institutional commitment to providing a holistic education. University of Windsor’s Brooke White, Executive Director of Student Development and Support, acknowledged that employers are looking for well-rounded applicants, and that many students have difficulty articulating and marketing the skills and competencies they developed through co-curricular engagement (Drolet, 2010). These comments speak to the more recent forms of the CCR—which has become an initiative that has taken off in Canada.

While there has been a recent uptake and enthusiasm for the CCR in Canada, there have been variations on the concept for decades. There is some literature that has examined the student development transcript and Co-Curricular Transcript, which are similar concepts to that of the CCR. University of Nebraska Professor Robert D. Brown wrote a few articles that examine the student development transcript in the late 1970s-1980s. Brown & Citrin (1977) describe how the unchanging nature of the academic transcript faces challenges in acting as a viable and useful tool for students, and thus a student development transcript can complement the academic transcript by providing a medium to assess and foster student learning and development. Brown and Citrin (1977) identified four primary purposes for developing the student development transcript: 1) acts a means to stimulate faculty, staff, and students in identifying institutional goals; 2) motivates students to engage in goal-setting, self-assessment and reflection; 3) serves as a record of attainments and competencies that can be used in the job search process or school applications; and 4) acts as a tool that can be used for life planning. The developmental transcript can be used both as a process and a product, where the transcript can be
used to help students develop and reflect on experiences and competencies, which can then be reflected on a transcript that can be shared with various stakeholders (Brown & DeCoster, 1982). With this, the transcript demonstrates an institutional commitment, which gives credibility and intentionality to student development (Brown & DeCoster, 1982). The purpose and rationale presented by Brown & Citrin (1977) and Brown & DeCoster (1982) are very similar to that of the Co-Curricular Records that have emerged in Canada in the recent decade, whereby the record is intended to be used as a learning tool that encourages reflection, and an official record that highlights experiences and skills to stakeholders, such as employers.

The student development transcript was a concept that was well-supported in the 1970s-1980s. Brown, Citrin, Pflum, & Preston (1978) administered the Student Development Transcript Survey, which elicited a response from 320 campus officers, including chief student affairs officers and vice-presidents/deans for academic affairs. The questionnaire included a cover letter that explained the transcript, and asked respondents to answer the questions as if their institution had a student development transcript. The results suggested that student affairs officers were significantly more supportive of the concept than academic officers, yet their was still a relatively high level of support from both groups, where over half of respondents noted that the student development transcript would be a worthy initiative to pursue. (Brown, Citrin, Pflum, & Preston, 1978).

Along with the support from chief postsecondary officers, results from Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North (1981) found employer interest in utilizing the Co-Curricular Transcript (similar to student development transcript) in the hiring process. Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North conducted the National Co-Curricular Transcript Survey in spring 1980, to assess employer reactions to co-curricular transcripts versus the traditional resume. With a random sample of 350
employers, three “representative” government agencies, and 145 employers who had interviewed students from the University of North Dakota, a total of 498 employers were in included in the sample, with a final response rate of 49.5%. In the study, four sets co-curricular transcripts and resumes were distributed to equal numbers of employers, each receiving one set with a closed-ended survey with 33 questions. The four sets included a male and female with high co-curricular involvement and low co-curricular involvement, and each set contained two documents: 1) a traditional resume with co-curricular activities listed within the resume, and 2) an identical resume with the co-curricular activities listed on the attached co-curricular transcript. The overall reaction to the inclusion of the co-curricular transcript was positive, where more than 7 out of 10 employers (71%) indicated they “would definitely want” or “would prefer to have” a co-curricular transcript included in job application (Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North, 1981). With this, 26% of employers answered that they place a “great deal” of importance on applicant’s co-curricular activity experience, and 66% indicated “some” importance. Since the co-curricular transcript is an official validated institutional document, employers were asked to indicate the importance of verification to them, with 48% answering “very important” or “important” and 22% responded “somewhat important”. Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North (1981) also found that employers “supported the inclusion of some measure of competencies or skills gained as a result of a student’s involvement in co-curricular activities.” This study demonstrated employer interest in utilizing the CCR in the labour market.

Despite interest from chief postsecondary officers and employers, beyond these articles from Brown and Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North (1981), there is limited information that explores what happened to this initiative in the 1980s. Interest in this concept seemed to reemerge within the last decade in Canada, where a number of institutions have started to develop and implement a Co-Curricular Record. At the first National Co-Curricular Record Summit, 60 professionals
from 43 Canadian postsecondary institutions gathered at the University of Toronto to discuss the CCR, share best practices, and discuss the future of the program. During the two-day Summit, professionals discussed the purpose of the CCR, including using the record as both a learning tool and a product (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014)—arguments that are similar to those that were presented in Brown & Citrin (1977). The CCR is an initiative that has rapidly taken off across Canada, and will continue to grow and expand in the coming years.

2.8 Chapter Summary

The narrative of this literature review supports the need and value for the Co-Curricular Record at the postsecondary level. A university education is intended to provoke thoughtful discussion, the analysis of ideas, and the individual growth and development of the student. Coupled with curricular opportunities to develop skills, co-curricular engagement can provide a complementary avenue that fosters student growth and the development of competencies. There has been rhetoric in the media that criticizes a postsecondary education, which emphasizes employers’ frustration with recent graduates, noting their inability to articulate and demonstrate desirable skills that employers look for. This perpetuates the rhetoric of youth unemployment/underemployment, and the lack of job-ready graduates.

Despite the criticisms, recent research and reports have reaffirmed the value of a university education. The Council for Ontario Universities (COU) found that university graduates have the lowest unemployment rates compared to youth with different levels of education, have higher earnings, and are more likely to find work closely or somewhat closely related to their program of study (Council for Ontario Universities, 2014b). Universities provide a myriad of experiences, and employers support the purpose of an education being holistic in
nature, and are looking for well-rounded candidates with desirable competencies and skills (Peter D. Hart Research Associates Inc., 2006). Thus, the hiring process looks to candidate materials to demonstrate the possession of these experiences and skills.

Examining the literature around candidate materials, the development and articulation of skills, such as communication and teamwork, are most valuable. If the Grade Point Average (GPA) is used in the hiring process, the literature suggests that it is often used as an initial screening process and not as a deciding factor (Causer, 2009; Brown & Campion, 1994; Hutchinson & Brefka, 1997; Posner, 1981; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; University Wire, 2014). Instead, employers will focus on the resume and interview to infer if a candidate is qualified. Since employers briefly scan a resume, it must succinctly capture relevant information (Job Bank, 2011). Employers also noted that they prefer initial contact to be through the cover letter and resume, and that educational background and previous work experience are the most valuable factors that demonstrate a candidate’s qualifications (Horn, 1988). The resume, interview, and social media profile contribute to shaping an employer’s perception of a candidate, and are used in tandem to help identify a candidate’s qualifications, personality, and fit with the position and organization.

Embedded in this process is the search for particular competencies and skills. Some of the top skills that studies and surveys have shown that employers look for include: leadership, communication, teamwork, social intelligence, problem-solving, and work ethic (Haffer & Hoth, 1980; McKendrick, 1986; Boatwright & Stamps, 1988; Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2008; Peter D. Hart Research Associates Inc., 2006; Canadian Council of Chief Executives, 2014). While employers look for these skills, the Harris Interactive Public Relations Research study (2013) found that hiring managers felt that
candidates lack the ability to express themselves in interviews and resumes, and lack the ability to display skills, such as communication and interpersonal.

The hiring process is intended to provide the platform to demonstrate the acquisition of these qualifications, and employers refer to a candidate’s educational background, previous work experience, references, and volunteer experiences as proof of these skills. Yet, only 1 in 6 employers noted that candidates have the skills that they look for (Harris Interactive Public Relations Research, 2013). How do students and recent graduates develop and then demonstrate their skills? Postsecondary institutions are moving towards encouraging a more holistic and robust educational experience, which encourages reflective practice to help heighten students’ self-awareness.

The MTCU and postsecondary institutions have been emphasizing the importance of experiential education and work-integrated learning. The Council for Ontario Universities published the report “Bringing Life to Learning”, which demonstrates how experiential opportunities, such as work-integrated learning, encourages the development of skills, and has shown to lead to higher employment rates (Council of Ontario Universities, 2014a). With this, there has been a shift in focus among career education at the university level, where students are encouraged to engage in opportunities to explore career prospects, develop skills through experiential opportunities, and engage in reflective practices and workshops (Rothenberg et al., 2012). The goal is to heighten awareness of the transferable nature of skills, and to educate students beyond traditional one-on-one appointments.

There is a wealth of literature and theories that demonstrate the importance of student engagement, and its impact on student success, retention, and development, and postsecondary institutions are formalizing this out-of-class learning. Some institutions have developed an e-
portfolio, which highlights a student’s academic and extracurricular involvement, while engaging students in reflective practices (Reese & Levy, 2009). Another movement that has taken hold across Canada, is the development of a Co-Curricular Record. The CCR emphasizes the institutional commitment to a holistic experience, and encourages students to participate in co-curricular experiences, while reflecting on the competencies and skills gained as a result of their co-curricular experiences.

This official validated record acknowledges that co-curricular experiences provide the opportunity to develop competencies and skills—skills that employers look for in the hiring process. The CCR is intended to address a need. It demonstrates to students the importance of being engaged and developing skills, while providing students with a platform to recognize and reflect on those experiences. The goal is to increase students’ self-awareness, and to assist them in marketing their experiences and speaking to transferable skills. The CCR is also intended to demonstrate to employers that universities provide a multitude of opportunities that fosters job-ready graduates, and that employers should be looking to these experiences as indicators of the skills that they are looking for. Thus, the CCR supports the value of higher education, by encouraging student growth and development, and providing a tool to translate those experiences and skills for students and employers.

While existing literature examines the purpose of an education, current hiring practices, benefits of co-curricular engagement, and institutional efforts at encouraging co-curricular engagement—there is a gap. The rhetoric of the job skills gap and the purpose of an education does not explicitly examine the role that the Co-Curricular Record can potentially play in the hiring process. While institutions continue to promote the CCR as a record that can be used in the hiring process, there is no relevant and current research that demonstrates its value. This
research study examines employer perceptions of the CCR, and explores the potential role that co-curricular engagement and the CCR can play in the hiring process.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The narrative of a “job skills gap” and the criticisms that stem from these claims, supports the need for understanding the landscape of current hiring practices. This thesis sought to explore the role and value of candidate materials and factors in the hiring process, competencies and skills that employers look for, and to understand student and recent graduates ability to articulate their credentials and skills in the hiring process. With the rapid adoption of Co-Curricular Records at postsecondary institutions, the purpose of this thesis was also to explore the perceived value of the CCR in the hiring process, and its potential in playing a role in the hiring process.

3.2 Research Questions

There are three broad purposes of this research study: to understand the level of importance of candidate materials and factors, to highlight the competencies employers seek in the hiring process, and to assess the role the CCR may play in the hiring process. To assess these broad purposes, this study explored the following research questions:

*Candidate Materials & Factors*

RQ1: What level of importance do employers place on different types of candidate materials (i.e., application form, cover letter, resume, interview, academic transcript, writing sample and social profile) and factors (i.e., educational degree, academic subject focus, grades, previous work experience, extracurricular participation, awards/official recognition, and references’ feedback) in the hiring process?
RQ1b: Does the level of importance placed on different hiring factors vary by the employers’ industry?

*Competencies*

RQ2: What competencies do employers look for in the hiring process?

RQ2b: Do the competencies that employers look for vary by industry?

RQ2c: How do employers rate the ability of candidates to describe the competencies and skills developed outside of the classroom?

*Co-Curricular Record*

RQ3: How likely would employers review a CCR in the hiring process?

RQ3b: What information on the CCR do employers find most valuable?

### 3.3 Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this research study is to examine employers’ current hiring process, and their perceived value of the Co-Curricular Record. With this, I explore whether these results differ across participants from different industries. The most appropriate research design to address the research questions is quantitative survey research, since it allows for a large number of respondents across variable characteristics, and provides measurable data (Creswell, 2005). Surveys can be used for descriptive and explanatory purposes, and provide information about large populations (Singleton, Jr. & Straits, 2010), and this study seeks to understand current hiring processes and explore the perceived value and use of the Co-Curricular Record in the hiring process from the perspective of employers.

The purpose of the study is specific and it allows for measuring variables and assessing its impact on an outcome (Creswell, 2005). The research questions focus on three broad purposes: understanding the level of importance of candidate materials and factors, the
competencies employers look for, and the role that the CCR may play as a candidate material and its role in helping candidates identify and articulate competencies. Exploring and investigating these research questions, allows for analyzing results across variables and groups, and comparing the results with previous studies (Creswell, 2005). Survey research can also be used to explore attitudes, beliefs, and values and is an efficient data-gathering technique (Singleton, Jr. & Straits, 2010). Since this study sought to explore the perceptions of large number of employers, a survey instrument was the most appropriate method.

3.4 Instrument Design

In order to address the research questions, the survey was intentionally divided into two sections (see Appendix C: Survey Protocol). The instrument was developed in such a way to understand current hiring processes, and then to assess the level of interest and value in using the Co-Curricular Record. Therefore, in between the two sections of the survey, a description of the CCR was provided, along with a sample of the record. Previous literature and studies, such as Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North (1981), were used to help develop the questions in this survey. The following section outlines the questions that were presented in the instrument.

The first 5 questions focused on current hiring practices and employer perceptions about the quality of current student and recent graduate candidates. The first few questions asked about candidate materials (i.e. cover letter, resume, application form) that are required in the submission process. In this thesis, candidate “materials” refer to the documentation (hardcopy or electronic) that is submitted in the hiring process, including: cover letter, resume, academic transcript, application form, writing sample, and/or other required documentation. Respondents were asked to identify which of these materials are required to be submitted, and were also asked if they allow for the submission of additional documents. This was intended to understand the
current landscape, and to better understand if employers have structured hiring processes or allow for the submission of additional materials—for example, a Co-Curricular Record. With this, respondents were asked to rate the importance of these candidate materials, using a Likert scale (very important, important, somewhat important, not at all important, not applicable). The interview was also included with the list of candidate materials. Respondents were also asked to identify how important hiring factors are in the hiring process. In this thesis, “factors” refers to the specifics of a candidate’s experiences and skills that would be presented on a resume or in the interview, including: educational degree, academic subject focus, grades, previous work experience, extracurricular participation, awards/official recognition, and references’ feedback. Respondents were asked to rank on a Likert scale the importance (very important, important, somewhat important, not at all important, not applicable) of each factor. They were then asked if they follow up with reference, if they seek to verify applicant’s extracurricular participation, and if they would be interested in having a means to verify extracurricular participation.

Respondents were asked to select all the competencies they look for when hiring (i.e., check all that apply) from the list of 31. The list presented in the survey was the competencies that the University of Toronto uses for their CCR, which includes a range of competencies, such as communication, teamwork, creative expression, and design thinking. (University of Toronto, 2014). The University of Toronto CCR competencies list was used in this survey for two reasons: 1) the respondents are from the U of T Career Centre database, and will be exposed to the outlined competencies; 2) the competencies are based on the Council for the Advancement in Standards in Higher Education (CAS) framework (2009), which is a widely used framework across institutions that have a CCR. Following this, respondents were asked to rate students/recent graduates ability to describe the competencies and skills developed outside of the classroom using the scale excellent, very good, satisfactory, and needs improvement.
A description of the Co-Curricular Record program was then given to employers, which also included the clarification of co-curricular versus extracurricular was stated, an outline of the opportunities captured on the CCR, the criteria for inclusion, the validation process, and a sample of record. There were then 6 questions specifically on the CCR, intended to gauge employers’ interest in using the CCR in the hiring process. The first question asked if to the best of their recollection, have they received a CCR from any candidate, and how useful did they find the information on the CCR (using the scale very useful to not at all useful). The questions that ensued asked how likely they would review a CCR in the hiring process if it were attached to an application, brought to an interview, and/or uploaded on LinkedIn, using a Likert scale (very likely to not at all likely). Respondents were asked to answer how useful they found the information on the CCR (very useful to not at all useful), and how important is it that each activity highlighted on the record is verified by a university staff or faculty member (very important to not important). They were then asked how valuable (ranging very valuable to not valuable) they found particular information on the CCR to be. However, a misinterpretation meant that only the single respondent who had received a CCR answered the couple questions about the value of including information about the role/position held in the activity, description of activity, and highlighted competencies/skills. A majority of respondents did answer the questions that followed, which asked about how valuable it would be to include the following additional information: number of hours per activity, definition of competencies, and description of validation process.

The survey concluded with 4 demographic questions: type of organization (i.e. for-profit, non-profit, government), type of industry, size of organization, and type of employment they are looking to hire students/recent graduates.
3.5 Participant Selection and Data Collection

The unit of analysis is employers—specifically those in positions seeking to hire students and/or recent graduates, and those that are registered with the University of Toronto Career Centre database. This research study was conducted in partnership with the Career Centres at the University of Toronto. Of the approximately 12,000 employers in the database, a sample of 1,698 employer contacts was compiled. The co-investigators from the U of T Career Centre (St. George Campus) determined the sample size using the following process. First, contacts were pulled from the U of T Career Centre employer database by industry. A random stratified proportional sampling was selected from each industry list to ensure that the sample was reflective of the industry distribution of the entire database. All contacts in the U of T employer database have had activity within the past two years. Any survey invitations that were returned to the sender were counted to ensure that the actual sample size was documented. Below is the list of email invitations based on the random stratified proportional sampling from the Career Centre database:

Table 1

Emails Sent—By Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th># Emails sent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting Services</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry &amp; Fishery</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural, Landscape &amp; Interior Design Services</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Entertainment &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking &amp; Financial Services</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotechnology &amp; Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Services - Other</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications, Media &amp; Public Relations</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer, Information and Internet Services</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment &amp; Human Resources Services</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy &amp; Utilities</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering &amp; Environmental Services</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Social Services</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal &amp; Security Services</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Consulting</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining, Oil &amp; Gas</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit &amp; Non-Government Organizations</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Services</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate &amp; Property Management</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Research &amp; Development</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply Chain, Logistics &amp; Transportation</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel, Hospitality &amp; Food Services</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A representative from the U of T Career Centre was responsible for emailing the invitation letter to participants selected in the sample. The sample was directed to the URL, and invited to fill out the survey online. After 1 week, the first reminder email was sent. Employers in the database have been invited by the Career Centre to participate in surveys in the past, and employers accept a terms & conditions that the Career Centre abides by, which are guidelines and policies outlined by the following organizations: Canadian Association of Career Educations and Employers (CACEE), Ontario Human Rights Commission, Employment Standards Act (Province of Ontario), and Federal Human Rights Commission. The survey was opened for a period of five weeks, with two reminder emails sent over the five weeks between August-September 2013.

The emails were sent out to 1,698 employers on three different dates and the number of bounce backs were as followed:

- Round 1 = 231
- Round 2 = 166
- Round 3 = 174
Using the lowest number of bounce backs, the lowest bound estimate is 1532 employers potentially received at least one email with the invitation. There were 110 employers who clicked to start the survey, 109 participants who answered a question, and 107 participants who answered the last question in the survey. Therefore, the overall response rate was approximately 7%. Since respondents were not required to answer all questions, there are some items that have missing data, therefore the number of respondents varies by question. I wanted to include all data, rather than just those respondents that answered all questions, since this is an exploratory study with a small respondent pool.

An electronic data collection tool was used, since it allows for an easy and quick form of data collection (Creswell, 2005). Data was collected through an online survey instrument on a secure server using Baseline, a Campus Labs product with which the University of Toronto has a contract.

There were four demographic questions that were asked in the survey. When asked, “What type of organization do you work for?” there were 63% of respondents that selected for-profit, 25% identified as non-profit, and 13% for government. When asked how many employees work for your organization, 9% selected 1-4 employees, 48% for 5-99 employees, 18% selected 100-499, and 25% of respondents identified 500 or more employees. This demonstrates that the nearly half of respondents are from larger-sized firms, with half of respondents from small- to mid-sized organizations. Respondents were also asked to identify which industry grouping they identify with, which will be further explored in the following section. Lastly, respondents were asked, “For what type of employment is your organization hiring students or recent graduates (check all that apply)?” There were a total of 225 responses from 107 respondents. There were 67% for full-time employment, 51% for part-time employment, 49% for co-op/internships, 44% that selected summer employment. Results can be further analyzed based on these additional
questions, however for the purpose of addressing the research questions, this thesis only ran analyses based on the five broad industry types.

3.6 Industry Groupings

Respondents were presented with 30 categories of types of industries, and were required to self-identify with one industry. Due to the large number of industries presented in the survey, the National Occupation Classification (NOC) was used to identify five industry groupings (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2013). Due to different language, I used my discretion to group industries into these five larger groupings. The industries are grouped into the following:

Table 2

*New Industry Groupings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Industry Grouping</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Number of emails sent</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Business, Finance and Administration</td>
<td>Accounting Services</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banking &amp; Financial Services</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Services - Other</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment &amp; Human Resources Services</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management Consulting</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real Estate &amp; Property Management</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Natural and Applied Sciences and Related Occupations</td>
<td>Architectural, Landscape &amp; Interior Design Services</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biotechnology &amp; Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer, Information and Internet Services</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering &amp; Environmental Services</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scientific Research &amp; Development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Health, Social Science, Education, Government Service</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health &amp; Social Services</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal &amp; Security Services</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Profit &amp; Non-Government Organizations</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts, Entertainment, Recreation</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The invitations sent to the 1698 employers were compiled using a random stratified proportional sampling method. The purpose of this sample was to gain a wide array and proportional sample of the employers represented in the University of Toronto Career Centre database. Table 2 highlights the number of emails sent, and the number of responses elicited from each industry. It is important to note that respondents were asked to self-identify which industry they identify with, which allows for the possibility of respondents selecting an industry that is different than the category they are grouped under in the U of T database. With this, there are some industries that have no respondents that participated in the study.

For the purpose of analyzing the results of this study, the five industry groupings will be used to analyze the results in order to explore whether there different industries elicited different responses.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

The primary method of analysis used the computation of descriptive statistics. Questions with Likert-style responses (i.e. responses on a scale from “very important” to “not important) were analyzed using means and frequency counts. Questions with categorical data (i.e. those without hierarchy, or demographic questions) were analyzed using frequency counts and
distributions. To analyze if there were statistical differences between respondents from different industries, a Pearson chi-square test was used.

To answer research question 1, I asked employers to rate the level of importance that various candidate materials and hiring factors played in the hiring process. These questions helped to assess the importance of varying factors in relation to one another, so that I can analyze the different level of importance placed on factors such as previous work experience and extracurricular participation. While this thesis explores current hiring practices broadly, I am particularly interested in how extracurricular engagement is currently perceived and used in the hiring process. Thus, looking at how important extracurricular participation is in the hiring process, a Pearson chi-square test is conducted to determine if there is a statistical significance in responses across industries.

To address research question 2, respondents were presented with a list of 31 competencies. Employers were asked to select as many competencies that they look for when hiring, therefore, frequency counts were used to determine how many times competencies were selected. To determine the average number of competencies selected per employer, I looked at the mean, median, and standard deviation. The frequency counts helps determine which competencies the most number of respondents consider important. The responses are then broken down by industry and ranked, so that I can analyze if the desired competencies vary across industry groupings. To analyze research question 2c, I used a question with a Likert scale (excellent, very good, satisfactory, and needs improvement) to assess how employers rate the ability of candidates to describe the competencies and skills developed outside of the classroom.

For research question 3, respondents were asked how likely they would be to review a CCR in the hiring process if it was attached to an application, brought to an interview, and
uploaded on LinkedIn. This allowed me to explore the likelihood of the CCR being reviewed in the hiring process, and the ability to compare the responses in this survey with Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North (1981) which looked also asked a question with a Likert scale, that assessed if employers would want the CCR included in application process. This study took this question one step further by conducting a Pearson chi-square test to examine if there is a statistical significant difference in responses between industries. A series of Likert scale questions were then asked to explore how valuable employers found a host of additional information on the CCR, including number of hours per activity, definition of competencies/skills, and description of validation process.

3.8 Limitations of Study

A few limitations were identified in this study, including low participation, unequal distribution of the respondent pool across the sample population of industries, sample used, and language. Of the 1,698 employers that were sent the survey, there was an overall 7% response rate, which varied by industry grouping. While the analysis looks at differences and similarities across these industry groupings, it is important to note that there was an unequal distribution of respondents across industries. The low response rate and unequal distribution also makes it difficult to find meaningful statistical significance across industries, thus increasing the likelihood of committing a Type II error—failing to find statistically significant differences in the sample when such differences exist in the population (Creswell, 2005). Therefore, in the analysis and discussion of these survey results, existing literature is used in tandem to help draw some conclusions and recommendations. These limitations can be addressed in future research, where a larger response rate and more representative industry grouping can allow for a meaningful representation of the results.
Furthermore, this survey was sent to employers that were registered with the University of Toronto Career Centre database. While many of these employers may also be registered with other postsecondary institutions, the fact that they are registered with U of T means that these employers actively seek to hire U of T students and recent graduates. While employers in the database are from various size and types of organizations and hire for various types of employment (e.g. summer, full-time), the generalizability of these results is limited to this single research-intensive institution. Therefore, the results cannot draw the conclusion that employers who are hiring candidates that do not fit the “student and/or recent graduate with a university credential” category would have responded in the same way.

Lastly, there were some limitations that arose due to the language used. Due to the wording of a couple questions, there was a misinterpretation that led to a majority of respondents to not answer, which is a limitation in gathering data critical to answering one of the research questions. Furthermore, there may be a lack of consistent understanding around the definitions of the competencies, which is a form of measurement error (Singleton, Jr. & Straits, 2010). For this reason, existing literature will be used to support the findings of this study.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This thesis will explore and analyze research questions focused on three broad topics: candidate materials and hiring factors, competencies, and the Co-Curricular Record. An online survey instrument tool was sent to 1,689 employer contacts that were compiled using a random stratified sample from 30 industry lists from the University of Toronto Career Centre database. Using the National Occupation Classification (NOC) to group the 30 industries, five groupings were created in order to analyze the results across similar industries. There were 110 responses,
which yielded a response rate of 7%. Various methods of descriptive statistics were used to analyze the results, along with chi-square tests, where appropriate.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research study is threefold. The first is to explore current hiring processes, including the current value of candidate materials and factors. The second purpose is to identify competencies employers look for and their perceived ability of candidates to articulate the competencies and skills they developed outside of the classroom. With this, the survey was intended to explore employer perceptions of the value of the CCR and its potential use in the hiring process. The survey questions were designed to assess the research questions, and are presented in three sections:

- Candidate materials and hiring factors
- Competencies and skills
- Co-Curricular Record

4.2 Candidate Materials & Hiring Factors

The first research question focuses on: What level of importance do employers place on different types of candidate materials (i.e., application form, cover letter, resume, interview, academic transcript, writing sample and social profile) and factors (i.e., educational degree, academic subject focus, grades, previous work experience, extracurricular participation, awards/official recognition, and references’ feedback) in the hiring process?

For the purpose of this thesis, “candidate materials” refers to the documentation (hardcopy or electronic) that is submitted in the hiring process. This includes the cover letter, resume, academic transcript, company application form, writing sample, or other documentation required. When asked, “In your current hiring practice, what materials are candidates required to
 responds to the question “What materials do you require?” Respondents were instructed to check all the materials that are required, which elicited 98% of respondents indicating the resume is required, and 83% for the cover letter.

![Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 2. Required Candidate Materials.**

Of those who responded, 30% of employers require the academic transcript, and 15% require an application form. Of the 14 respondents that selected “other”, they noted that candidates are required to complete an assignment, presentation or skills test, produce examples of work or a portfolio, and/or provide references. This question was followed up with, “Can candidates submit additional documentation?” 93% of respondents answered yes. These questions signify that while employers and hiring managers rely heavily on the traditional materials of the cover letter and resume, most allow the applicants to submit additional documents, such as portfolios, examples, and references.

Drilling into more detail, respondents were asked on a Likert scale to rank the importance (very important, important, somewhat important, not at all important, not applicable) of the
following candidate materials and processes (i.e. interview) in their hiring decisions. Figure 3 highlights the responses, based on those who selected very important or important.

![Bar graph showing the importance of candidate materials and factors.]

**Figure 3. Importance of Candidate Materials & Factors.**

Respondents felt the interview (100%) was the most frequently identified as being very important or important in the hiring decision, along with the resume (97%) and cover letter (68%). For the academic transcript, 14% indicated the transcript is very important or important, while 23% chose not important and 18% selected not applicable (results not displayed in Figure 3). A candidate’s social profile (i.e. Facebook, twitter, blogs) and LinkedIn profile elicited the smallest percentage of the respondents who identified it as very important or important (10% and 6% respectively), with more than one-third of respondents selecting not applicable.

Specific materials may be particularly useful for some employers, depending on the nature of the job and the specific qualifications that they are looking for, along with the applicant pool that they are assessing. Yet, universally, these results demonstrate that employers find the
interview and resume to be the most important candidate materials that they consider in their decision-making process.

Candidate materials and processes, such as the resume and interview, are used as indicators to assess the level of credentials and skills a candidate possesses. To explore the specific factors presented in these candidate materials and processes, respondents were asked, “How important are the following factors when reviewing candidate materials in the hiring process?” In this thesis, “factors” refers to the specifics of a candidate’s experiences and skills that would be presented on a resume or in the interview, including: educational degree, academic subject focus, grades, previous work experience, extracurricular participation, awards/official recognition, and references’ feedback. Respondents were asked to rank on a Likert scale the importance (very important, important, somewhat important, not at all important, not applicable) of each factor, and the following figure highlights the percentage of respondents who selected very important or important.

Figure 4. Importance of Hiring Factors.
In this table, previous work experience was the most frequently identified factor noted as very important or important, followed by educational degree and references’ feedback. It is important to note that among the respondents who selected previous work experience, the majority selected very important (60%) compared to important (27%), and only one respondent felt that it was not important. For educational degree, two respondents felt that the degree was not important, while the majority felt that it is very important (45%) or important (40%). Conversely, while academic subject focus was regarded as important, a larger percentage of respondents selected important (48%) compared to very important (30%). Extracurricular participation was ranked fifth of seven, with just under one-half of employers regarding this factor as very important or important. Of these responses, a large percentage felt that extracurricular participation was somewhat important (42%), with 10% selecting not important. Only 9% of respondents felt that grades were very important, while the majority felt that it was somewhat important (40%) or important (37%). These results demonstrate that previous work experience and educational degree are the two factors identified by the largest percentage of employers as very important or important in employers’ assessment of candidates’ competencies and credentials. While most of the factors were considered important, examining the percentage of employers who identified the factor as very important or important provides an implicit ranking of the factors used in the hiring process and provides some insight into the varying degrees of importance.

The ranking of importance among these factors appear to differ once we observe the results across different industry groupings. A sub-question of the first research question explores: Does the level of importance placed on different types of candidate materials and factors vary by the employers’ industry? Table 3 presents the factors in order that members of the industry identified them as very important or important.

Table 3
### Ranking of Hiring Factors – By Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business &amp; Finance</th>
<th>Natural &amp; Applied Sciences</th>
<th>Health, Education, &amp; Gov’t</th>
<th>Sales &amp; Service</th>
<th>Trades &amp; Manufacturing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Degree</td>
<td>Educational Degree</td>
<td>Previous Work Experience</td>
<td>Previous Work Experience</td>
<td>Previous Work Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References’ Feedback</td>
<td>Previous Work Experience</td>
<td>Educational Degree</td>
<td>References’ Feedback</td>
<td>Educational Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Subject Focus</td>
<td>Academic Subject Focus</td>
<td>References’ Feedback</td>
<td>Extracurricular Participation</td>
<td>Academic Subject Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Work Experience</td>
<td>References’ Feedback</td>
<td>Academic Subject Focus</td>
<td>Academic Subject Focus</td>
<td>References’ Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>Extracurricular Participation</td>
<td>Extracurricular Participation</td>
<td>Educational Degree</td>
<td>Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Participation</td>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>Awards/Official Recognition</td>
<td>Extracurricular Participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 and Table 3 appear to demonstrate some differences in responses across industries, and the colours in Figure 4 are used to emphasize the differences in ranking across industries in Table 3. Looking at respondents from the Business & Finance industry, previous work experience is ranked fourth—which is lower than the aggregate ranking—while educational degree and academic subject focus are ranked in the top 3. Extracurricular participation is ranked sixth. This suggests that this industry places more emphasis on factors associated with the academic curricula. A similar result is found with those from Natural & Applied Sciences, with the difference being a higher level of importance placed on previous work experience. A number of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) programs place emphasis on experiential learning, whether it is through a professional experience year, lab time, or engagement with other curricular-related activities. In the fields of Health, Education & Gov’t, respondents indicated previous work experience and educational degree as most important. This is a broad industry that includes regulated occupations, which require specific academic
credentials. Respondents from Sales & Service ranked extracurricular participation the highest among the industry groupings, ranking it as more important than academic subject focus or educational degree, and no respondent selected grades as very important or important. This suggests that this industry is more concerned with general skills and competencies that may not be directly connected to an academic credential. Lastly, respondents from Trades & Manufacturing indicated previous work experience as the most important, followed by academic credentials through a degree and subject focus. Employees in these industries often rely on regulated and specific knowledge to perform the job. In Figure 5, I present percentage breakdowns of the importance of select factors by industry.

Figure 5. Importance of Hiring Factors – By Industry.

The details presented in this table echo the differences highlighted in Figure 4, but with greater nuance. In response to research question 1b, “Does the level of importance placed on different candidate factors vary by the employers’ industry?” there are a few glaring differences.
Respondents from Trades & Manufacturing placed the most importance on 4 out of 5 factors presented, including previous work experience (100%), educational degree (94%), academic subject focus (94%), and grades (75%). This suggests that this industry places significant importance on content knowledge and credentials along with previous work experience.

Alternatively, respondents from Sales & Service indicated the least importance across all factors associated with educational credentials, including educational degree (40%), academic subject focus (46%), and grades (0%). This suggests that this industry places significantly more importance on the demonstration of soft skills that have been developed through previous work experience and/or extracurricular participation, over hard skills developed through academic credentials. The responses from Trades & Manufacturing and Sales & Service demonstrate the differences between regulated and non-regulated professions. Regulated professions require a license to practice, and account for about 20% of jobs (Job Bank, 2014). Those from Trades & Manufacturing may have placed significant importance on the academic degree, subject focus, and grades, since many of the occupations may be regulated. Alternatively, most jobs in Sales & Service are unregulated, which may account for a higher emphasis placed on skills over content knowledge. Respondents across industries may have indicated varying degrees of importance depending on whether they are from a regulated or non-regulated profession.

Given my interest in the value placed on extracurricular participation, I examined the extent to which the importance of extracurricular participation varied by industry. I conducted a Pearson chi-square test to assess whether the responses across industries differed in ways that were statistically significant. For the purpose of the test, I grouped very important and important into one category, and kept the two other groups (somewhat important and not important) as-is. The results found no statistically significant difference in the responses across industries, where \( \chi^2 (4,2) = 0.912; p > .05; n = 100 \). Therefore, while the observation of the results suggests
differences, the chi-square test reveals that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of importance placed on extracurricular participation across industries.

When asked about whether they follow up with references, 83% of respondents said yes. Respondents were subsequently asked if they seek to verify applicant’s extracurricular participation, and only 10% said yes. Then when asked if they would be interested in having a means to verify extracurricular participation, the number of those who responded yes, increased to 32%. While the majority of employers rely on references’ feedback in the hiring process, they are not necessarily interested in asking about verifying extracurricular participation.

4.3 Competencies/Skills

The second research question looks at: What competencies do employers look for in the hiring process? Respondents were given a list of 31 competencies, and were asked to check all competencies they look for when hiring. The 109 respondents yielded 1338 responses. When analyzing the number of competencies selected, the mean and median were 12 competencies. The standard deviation was 5.6, which indicates that the majority of employers selected between 7 and 17 competencies out of a possible 31 competencies. There were five respondents that selected 3 competencies or fewer, and five that selected 23-26 competencies. Figure 6 highlights the list of competencies, ranked in the order employers identified them as sought in the hiring process.
The top eleven competencies that were selected the most frequently (in order) are:
communication, professionalism, teamwork, critical thinking, collaboration, decision-making and action, technological aptitude, commitment to ethics and integrity, goal-setting and prioritization, strategic thinking, and self-awareness. Looking at this list, it is apparent that almost all respondents look for competency in communication in the hiring process, followed by professionalism and teamwork. These competencies are quite broad and transferable, compared to some other competencies that are much more focused on a particular field or theme—such as global perspective and engagement, health promotion, and spiritual awareness.
A sub-question of research question 2 focuses on: Do the competencies that employers seek vary by industry? Broken down by industry, I present the top 5 competencies selected in the following table.

Table 4

*Top 5 Competencies Selected Across Industry Groupings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business &amp; Finance</th>
<th>Natural &amp; Applied Sciences</th>
<th>Health, Education, &amp; Gov’t</th>
<th>Sales &amp; Service</th>
<th>Trades &amp; Manufacturing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Technological aptitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Technological aptitude</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic thinking</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Strategic thinking/ Self-awareness/ Leadership/ Goal-setting &amp; prioritization</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>Decision-making &amp; action/ Professionalism/ Design thinking</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professionalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table uses the colours in Figure 6 to highlight the top competencies that are selected. When looking at competencies selected across all five industries, communication, professionalism, and teamwork were ranked consistently in the top five—often in the top three. Other repeats in the top five include technological aptitude, strategic thinking, and critical thinking. This suggests that regardless of the industry that students and recent graduates are looking to pursue, there are core competencies that are valued across industries.

One competency that was ranked lower than many studies was leadership (which was ranked 12th). The difference in ranking may be attributed to the types of jobs that employers are hiring for. They may look for leadership skills for more mid-to-senior level positions, rather than entry-level jobs for students and recent graduates. Some of the competencies that were also ranked lower, included design thinking (21st), creative expression (22nd), global awareness
engagement (29th), and health promotion (30th). This does not mean that these competencies are not considered valuable, but rather may be more geared specifically towards a particular industry or field. For example, design thinking overall was ranked 21st, however was tied for 5th in the Natural & Applied Sciences industry grouping.

Another sub-question, explores: How do employers rate the ability of candidates to describe the competencies and skills developed outside of the classroom? Respondents were asked, “Reflecting on the applications you have received from students and/or recent graduates, how would you rate their ability to describe the competencies and skills developed outside the classroom?”

![Figure 7. Articulation of Competencies.](image)

A small percentage of respondents (4%) felt that candidates do an excellent job at articulating their competencies, while 35% selected very good, 49% felt satisfactory, and 12% said needs improvement.

### 4.4 Co-Curricular Record

After the first set of questions, respondents were provided information about the Co-Curricular Record initiative. In this description, the clarification of co-curricular versus extracurricular was stated, along with an outline of the opportunities captured on the CCR, the
criteria for inclusion, the validation process, and a sample of record. Respondents were then asked to answer a series of questions, which addressed the following research questions: 1) How likely would employers review a CCR in the hiring process, and 2) What information on the CCR do employers find most valuable?

Using a Likert scale (very likely, likely, not likely, and not at all likely), respondents were asked, “How likely would you review a student and/or recent graduate’s CCR in the hiring process in the following ways?” Figure 8 highlights the responses of very likely and likely.

Figure 8. Reviewing a CCR.

This indicates that 77% of employers are very likely or likely to review a CCR if attached to an application and 73% if brought to an interview. Respondents are less likely to review the CCR if uploaded to the LinkedIn profile. Of those that indicated they are 77% likely review a CCR if attached to an application, 28% selected very likely, and 49% indicated likely. If brought to an interview, 21% of respondents selected they would very likely review the CCR, while another 52% selected likely. Only 6% selected they would very likely review the CCR if uploaded on LinkedIn, while 14% selected likely. These results indicate that there is interest among respondents in using the CCR in the hiring and decision-making process.
To see if there was a difference across industries, the results were broken down into the five industry groupings.

Looking at the results, it appears that three of the industry groupings (Business & Finance, Sales & Service, Trades & Manufacturing) are the most likely to review a CCR if it was attached to an application. Respondents from Natural & Applied Sciences appear to be the least likely to review a CCR if attached to an application, but more likely if it is brought to an interview. All industries are least likely to review a CCR if uploaded to a LinkedIn profile.

However, in order to determine if this difference is statistically significant, a Pearson chi-square test was conducted for each of the scenarios. For the purpose of the test, I grouped very likely and likely into one category, and kept the two other groups (not likely and not at all likely) as-is. For “attached to an application”, the results found that there is no statistically significant significance in the responses across industries, where $\chi^2 (4, 2) = 0.415; p > .05; n = 95$. For
“brought to an interview”, the results found that there is no statistical significance in the responses across industries, where $\chi^2 (4, 2) = 0.668; p > .05; n = 95$. Lastly, for “uploaded on LinkedIn”, the results found that there is no statistical significance in the responses across industries, where $\chi^2 (4, 2) = 0.240; p > .05; n = 90$. Therefore, while the results demonstrate some variation, the chi-square test reveals that there is no statistically significant difference. Thus, a majority of respondents across industries are very likely or likely to review a CCR if attached to an application or brought to an interview.

Looking at the use of the CCR, and the value of specific information, respondents were asked a series of questions. There was only one respondent that selected yes when asked if they have ever received a Co-Curricular Record from a candidate, and they responded that it provided somewhat useful information in helping them make their hiring decision. When asked how useful would you find the information on the CCR in making a hiring decision, of the 97 respondents, 5% selected very useful, 29% useful, 52% somewhat useful, and 14% selected not at all useful. That means a total of 86% respondents noted that the CCR would provide some use in the hiring process.

A series of pointed questions about the CCR were then asked in the survey. When asked, “How important is it that each opportunity highlighted on the Co-Curricular Record is verified by a university staff or faculty member?” 47% of respondents selected very important (19%) or important (28%), 32% said somewhat important, and 21% said not important.

Some common elements on the CCR documents across institutions include: time period, opportunity name, position held, description of opportunity, and competencies/skills developed. Postsecondary institutions have also debated the value of including additional information (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014), and this survey sought to
explore the perceived value of that additional information. Employers were asked, “How valuable would it be to include the following additional information on the Co-Curricular Record?” Below are the results from those respondents who answered very valuable or valuable.

These findings demonstrate that the more information presented, the more value the CCR has. There were 10-20% of employers that felt the inclusion of additional information would not be valuable. The strongest finding was the inclusion of the definition of competencies/skills, with 68% of respondents selecting very valuable or valuable.

4.5 Chapter Summary

The results highlight respondents’ perceptions and feelings about current hiring practices and the new Co-Curricular Record. Questions examined current hiring practices, including how extracurricular engagement is valued, the competencies that employers look for, and respondents’ perception of students and recent graduates’ ability to articulate the competencies and skills they have developed outside of the classroom. Employers rely on traditional candidate materials in the hiring process, where 98% of respondents noted that candidates are required to
submit a resume and 30% are required to submit an academic transcript. With this, 93% of respondents allow for the submission of additional materials, and some require candidates to produce examples of work or a portfolio, complete a skills test, and/or complete an assignment or presentation. Looking at the importance of different materials and processes, 100% of respondents felt that the interview is very important or important in influencing their hiring decision, followed by the resume (97%), cover letter (68%), and academic transcript (40%). Respondents rely on these materials and processes as indicators to assess if candidates have the desirable competencies and skills.

Looking at specific hiring factors, respondents noted that previous work experience (87%), educational degree (85%), references’ feedback (79%), and academic subject focus (78%) are very important or important in the hiring process, and 49% of respondents selected extracurricular participation. This demonstrates that more respondents view previous work experience as an indicator for competencies and skills they look for, compared to extracurricular participation. Examining these results across industry groupings, there is some variation. Most industries place value on academic credentials (Business & Finance, Natural & Applied Sciences, Heath, Education & Gov’t, and Trades & Manufacturing), while those in Sales & Service consider previous work experience, references’ feedback, and extracurricular participation as more valuable. However, after running a chi-square test on how respondents value extracurricular participation, the results found that there is no meaningful statistical significance across industries.

Respondents were asked to select competencies/skills that they look for when hiring from a list of 31 competencies. A total of 1338 responses yielded a mean and median of 12 competencies selected per respondent. The top 5 competencies selected were communication
(95%), professionalism (86%), teamwork (81%), critical thinking (72%), and collaboration (65%). Examining the results across industries, all industry groupings had communication, professionalism, and teamwork in their top 5. This demonstrates that there are core competencies that are valued in the labour market, regardless of the industry. However, there are some specific competencies that are more valued in some industries over others, since they require specific content knowledge and skills—such as design thinking in the Natural & Applied Sciences field.

Respondents were asked how likely they would review a CCR, and 77% selected that they would be very likely or likely to review a CCR if attached to an application, 73% if brought to an interview, and 20% if uploaded on a LinkedIn profile. This demonstrates that there is an interest in utilizing the CCR in the hiring process, and that additional information could be useful in the decision-making process. While results across industries vary to a slight degree, a chi-square test found that there is no statistical significance across industries in how likely they would be to review a CCR.

When asked about the Co-Curricular Record, although only 1 respondent had every received a CCR, a majority of respondents noted that the CCR can be useful in the hiring process, with 5% noting that it would be very useful, 29% selected useful, and 51% found the CCR somewhat useful. Looking at specific information on the CCR, the results indicate that the more information presented, the more useful it would be in the decision-making process. There were only 10-20% of employers that felt the inclusion of additional information (i.e. number of hours, definition of competencies/skills, and description of validation process) would not be valuable.

Looking through the data, there were a few key findings that relate to the research questions. The most important hiring factor in the hiring process was previous work experience...
(87%), compared to extracurricular participation (49%), which was ranked 5/7 in the hiring factors presented. With this, respondents look for a range of competencies and skills in the hiring process, with the most popular being communication (95%), professionalism (86%), and teamwork (81%). These competencies were also in the top five competencies when broken down by industry groupings. When assessing students’ ability in articulating the competencies and skills they developed outside the classroom, the results suggest that there is room for improvement, with only 4% of respondents selecting excellent, 49% indicating satisfactory and 12% selecting needs improvement. There is interest in reviewing the CCR in the hiring process, with 77% of respondents selecting that they would very likely or likely review a CCR if attached to an application, 73% if brought to an interview, and 20% if uploaded to a LinkedIn profile. These key findings will be further discussed in the following chapter, and will be used to support a series of recommendations.
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

Hiring is a screening process intended to assess the qualifications and competencies of candidates. Through this process, employers will often take 30 seconds to scan an application and determine whether or not they are interested in the candidate (Job Bank, 2011). Therefore, candidates must provide a succinct overview of their qualifications and competencies, in order to catch the eye of the employer.

For postsecondary institutions, it is important to understand this process in order to better understand how staff and faculty can help prepare students in their career exploration and job search. With the development of the Co-Curricular Record, it is especially important to assess the ways in which the record can be used as a tool, and to gauge employer interest in utilizing the CCR in the hiring process. The results from this thesis suggests that employers are currently not looking to extracurricular participation as a primary indicator of the competencies and skills that they look for, and that there is room for improvement in helping students articulate the competencies and skills developed. This perpetuates the rhetoric of a “job skills gap,” when it may be that graduates lack the ability to articulate their skills, rather than a true gap. Through the results of this survey and the existing literature, it is evident that employers are looking for a set of core competencies—such as communication, professionalism, and teamwork. Through the literature, we know that engagement in co-curricular opportunities can provide the foundation for developing such desirable transferable skills. Yet, if employers are not acknowledging the value of co-curricular experiences as indicators of competencies, and students are inadequately articulating those competencies, then there is an identified gap.
The following chapter will discuss the findings of this study, focusing on candidate materials and hiring factors, competencies, and the Co-Curricular Record. I will then draw some conclusions, discuss implications, and propose a series of recommendations.

5.2 Discussion

The following results are broken down by research question:

5.2a Candidate Materials & Hiring Factors

RQ1: What level of importance do employers place on different types of candidate materials and factors in the hiring process?

The results of this survey and the existing literature demonstrate that the hiring process places significant importance on the resume and interview. While most respondents (93%) allow for the submission of additional documents, the cover letter (83%) and resume (98%) are often required, while some employers may require other materials, such as the academic transcript (30%), an application form (15%), and writing sample (8%). These materials are used as indicators to assess the qualifications of candidates, yet must do so in a succinct and accessible format. In Horn’s (1988) research, only 7% of respondents preferred paper copy submissions, with the rest preferring email or applying directly on the company website. CACEE (Smith & Lam, 2013) found similar results, with only 5% still utilizing a hardcopy application, while the majority preferred online submissions. These results note that applications must be accessible through electronic formats, and that candidates have the opportunity to submit documentation that helps provide a concise overview of their qualifications.

Most employers do not require the submission of the academic transcript (30%), and with that, 40% respondents find the transcript to be very important or important in the hiring process.
Referring to the academic literature, the grade point average (GPA) plays a limited role in the hiring process. Employers may refer to the academic transcript in an initial screening process, but beyond that, do not use it as an indicator of competencies and qualifications. (Causer, 2009; McKinney et al., 2003; Brown & Campion, 1994; Hutchinson & Brefka, 1997; Posner, 1981; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Employers may refer to the academic transcript, but when asked about the importance of grades in the hiring process, it was ranked 6/7 in relation to other hiring factors. The educational degree and academic subject focus were considered more important than grades themselves.

While the transcript plays a limited role, the resume is critical in assessing candidates’ qualifications and skills, which is then further assessed through the interview. One of the challenges with resumes is applicants who exaggerate or lie. The interview, therefore, can act as a check and catch those lies, along with fill in the gaps of knowledge (Brown, 1993). In this study, 100% of respondents indicated that the interview is very important or important in influencing their hiring decision, followed by the resume (97%) and cover letter (68%). The interview and resume provide the most insight into the qualifications and skills of a candidate. For example, while a candidate may appear qualified on paper, McKendrick (1986) found that a candidate’s inability to communicate clearly and a lack of preparation was considered the largest problem with a candidate’s interview. Thus, the combination of a succinct overview in the resume, and a more in-depth discussion about the candidate’s qualifications and skills during the interview, helps the employer form a more robust impression.

In the literature, social media has been found to play a prominent role in the hiring process—a finding that was not supported by the results in this study. For example, in Staples (2013), the NACE study found that 90.7% of employers used Facebook in the hiring process. In
this study, only 10% of respondents indicated a candidate’s social profile as very important or important in the hiring process, and 6% for a LinkedIn profile. The potential difference between these findings and those in existing literature may be in the difference in framing the question. This study emphasized the level of importance of social media in the hiring process, rather than the frequency. What is evident, however, is that the resume and interview are considered the most important in assessing candidate’s suitability for a position, which employers are using as indicators to flag qualified candidates.

Drilling deeper into the information presented in the resume and during the interview, respondents indicated the relative importance various factors play in the hiring process. When asked to rate how important specific hiring factors are in the hiring process, the factors ranked by importance were: previous work experience (87%), educational degree (85%), references’ feedback (79%), academic subject focus (78%), extracurricular participation (49%), grades (46%), and awards/official recognition (28%). This suggests that respondents primarily look to previous work experience, references, and academic credentials as indicators of these skills. Previous work experience demonstrates the relevant experiences and skills candidates have developed, and references’ feedback confirms the extent to which candidates possess those skills. The educational degree and academic subject focus demonstrate that students have developed some core competencies that one can expect from a postsecondary education—such as communication, critical thinking, and knowledge acquisition. They may also be considered very important if the industry is interested in hiring candidates with specific content knowledge—for example, engineering. Comparing these results to the literature, while the percentages vary, the ranking order does not. For example in the study conducted by Harris Interactive Public Relations Research (2013), hiring managers selected evidence of basic skills as most important, followed by educational background, directly related experience, references, and
volunteering/internship experience. The literature focuses on the skills that employers look for (Smith & Lam, 2013; Canadian Council of Chief Executives, 2014; Haffer & Hoth, 1986), and these hiring factors are used as indicators of those skills.

Understanding that employers look for soft skills when hiring, it is surprising that extracurricular participation is not regarded as more important. While almost half of respondents selected very important or important, extracurricular participation was ranked 5/7 compared to previous work experience, which elicited the highest number of responses. This finding suggests that employers do not necessarily view extracurricular participation as an avenue for students to develop competencies and skills. Employers may not fully be aware of what occurs in co-curricular opportunities, and the level of responsibility and concrete experience that can occur through those activities. Alternatively, work experience may be conceptually easier for employers to see the connection, since they directly correlate work experience with the development of skills.

Educational degree and academic subject focus were considered very important, which suggests that employers value education, and view it as a means to develop competencies and skills. The literature demonstrates that employers see education as a means to develop skills, where 73% of employers acknowledged that education plays a “very important” role in the global economy (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., 2006). However, recent reports also highlight employer frustration with recent graduates—although reports have yielded varying results. The Conference Board of Canada (2014) found that 73% of employers say there is a “misalignment between the number of postsecondary graduates in Ontario, their subject areas, and employers’ needs,” and a survey conducted by the Canadian Chief Executive and Entrepreneurs (2014) found that 60% of respondents are largely satisfied with the preparedness
of recent graduates, and 25% were neutral or dissatisfied. Yet, while employers may have some concerns about the skills gap and/or preparedness of graduates, the Council of Ontario Universities (2014b) affirm that *University Works*. In their recent report, compared to candidates with other credentials, university graduates had the lowest unemployment rate, had the highest employment, and were more likely to find work closely or somewhat closely related to their program of study.

RQ1b: **Does the level of importance placed on different candidate factors vary by the employers’ industry?**

Reports and academic literature that we used in this study focused on hiring factors that employers look for, but did not compare the differences across industries. My study addressed this gap by specifically examining if the importance placed on extracurricular participation in the hiring process varied across industries. While I found some interesting observations in this study, the small sample size made it difficult to find statistically significant differences across industries. An area for further research is to delve in the differences across industries—either by industry type or regulated versus non-regulated—with a larger sample.

In this study, there were some observational differences across industries and the level of importance they place on different hiring factors. As presented in the results, some industries placed more importance on knowledge and skills developed through education, while others placed more importance on previous work experience and extracurricular participation. Those from Trades & Manufacturing placed the most emphasis on grades (75%) compared to respondents from other industries, such as Natural & Applied Science (33%) and Sales & Service (0%). However, they also placed a significant amount of importance on previous work experience (100%), educational degree (94%) and academic subject focus (94%). This suggests
that this industry values specific knowledge and skills that are developed through an academic program, yet also require the demonstration of this knowledge through previous work experience. Alternatively, respondents from Sales & Service appeared to be the most likely to look at extracurricular participation (60%), which was ranked third after previous work experience and references’ feedback. Academic credentials and subject focus was ranked lower than other industries, which may speak to the importance of transferable skills over specific content knowledge. These two industries represent a continuum, whereby depending on the industry and duties of an occupation, there may be more value placed on hard skills or soft skills. This difference may also be attributed to varying requirements from regulated and non-regulated professions. Regulated professions are about 20% of jobs in Canada, and require a license to practice—thus require specific knowledge and/or credentials (Job Bank, 2014). This may account for the higher ranking of educational degree and academic subject focus in some industry groupings over others.

While there are nuanced differences across professions and industries, these results highlight what employers look to as indicators of the competencies and skills they look for. While almost half of respondents indicated extracurricular participation is important or very important, comparing with the other factors, it was ranked fifth. Examining across industries, a chi-square test revealed that despite the perceived differences in ranking across industry groupings, there is no statistically significant difference in the ways in which extracurricular participation is considered important. Therefore, the results suggest that the level of importance placed on extracurricular participation does not differ across industries, and that it is not viewed as a primary indicator that employers use to assess if candidates possess the skills and competencies that they look for.
5.2b Competencies

RQ2: What competencies do employers look for in the hiring process? and RQ2b: Do the competencies that employers look for vary by industry?

Knowing that employers look for a range of competencies and skills, this study asked respondents to identify the particular competencies they look for in the hiring process. Competencies and skills can be developed through a variety of experiences, including curricular, co-curricular, and work experience. The competencies/skills that were used for the purpose of this study were directly selected from the competencies framework that the University of Toronto uses for their Co-Curricular Record, which is based on the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education. The literature supports that students develop skills and competencies through co-curricular engagement (Astin, 1993; Haber & Komives, 2009; Tinto, 1987), and thus this question was important in building the argument of this thesis.

Respondents identified that there are core competencies that are valued, regardless of the organization or industry type. The 109 respondents yielded 1338 responses, with a mean and median of 12 competencies selected per employer. The top eleven competencies that were selected the most (in order) are: communication, professionalism, teamwork, critical thinking, collaboration, decision-making and action, technological aptitude, commitment to ethics and integrity, goal-setting and prioritization, strategic thinking, and self-awareness. The top three selected competencies from the aggregate level were also in the top 5 across all industry groupings: communication, professionalism, and teamwork. Some other competencies that appear in the top 5 across multiple industries include critical thinking, strategic thinking, collaboration, and technological aptitude. There were however, some competencies that were
ranked low in the list of competencies at the aggregate level, but were in the top 5 for one industry—such design thinking for Natural & Applied Sciences.

Many of the top competencies selected are consistent with the findings found in existing literature. The CCCE (2014) found that employers look for people skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills analytical abilities, and leadership skills. A number of studies identified communication as the top skill (Haffer & Hoth, 1980; McKendrick, 1986; Boatwright and Stamps, 1988; Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2008; Stratford, 2013). The NACE 2008 Job Outlook survey found that the top skills employers look for are: communication skills, strong work ethic, teamwork, initiative, and interpersonal skills. Peter D. Hart Research Associates Inc. (2006) found teamwork skills, critical thinking, analytical reasoning skills, and communication skills as the most important. Across the literature, communication, strong work ethic, critical thinking, and teamwork skills rank in the top. CACEE found that top 5 characteristics employers look for in candidates are: communication skills (verbal), teamwork skills, analytical skills, strong work ethic, and problem-solving skills (Smith & Lam, 2013). Regardless if the profession is regulated or non-regulated, there are core competencies that are valued.

The challenge for employers, is deciphering which candidate’s possess these desirable skills. Thus, they rely on the candidate to demonstrate these competencies in the hiring process, both through the resume and interview. There is a perceived skills gap that has been perpetuated in the media. However, this study suggests that there may not necessarily be a job skills gap, but a lack of articulation of skills. While there were only 12% of respondents that noted the ability of students/recent graduates to articulate competencies/skills developed outside the classroom needs improvement, 49% of respondents selected satisfactory. This suggests that there is an
opportunity to help students develop, and better articulate their relevant skills in the job search process.

RQ2c: How do employers rate the ability of candidates to describe the competencies and skills developed outside of the classroom?

When asked about the ability of students and/or recent graduates to describe the competencies and skills developed outside the classroom, 12% selected needs improvement, 49% satisfactory, 35% very good, and 4% selected excellent. This statistic highlights that there is room to improve students’ ability to describe their experiences, and for postsecondary institutions to articulate to employers the benefits of co-curricular experiences. In the Career Advisory Board Job Preparedness Indicator survey, 20-25% of hiring managers found that students did not know how to promote themselves in the interview and resume, and did not demonstrate strong communication skills (Harris Interactive Public Relations Research, 2013). Kelley & Gaedeke (1990) argued that the greatest weakness of graduates was communication skills (44%). Referring back to how important extracurricular participation is in the hiring process, half of employers look to this as an indicator of qualifications. Employers are relying on students’ ability to demonstrate their development of soft skills, and if some students are unable to articulate the value of those co-curricular experiences, then these experiences and skills are lost in the process. This highlights a gap – many employers often do not know how extracurricular participation can lead to the development of skills they look for, and some students may not be articulating those experiences and skills in the hiring process. Thus, for some candidates, the value of co-curricular engagement is lost in the process, and the job skills gap rhetoric is perpetuated, despite the fact that it may be skewed. The results found in this survey confirm that some students and recent graduates have a difficult time articulating and
marketing their co-curricular experiences, which is critical in the hiring process, since it requires a succinct and solid representation of one’s qualifications in the resume and interview. The challenge of postsecondary institutions is to help students reflect on their experiences, and give them the tools and resources to help them market themselves in their application and interview.

5.2c Co-Curricular Record

RQ3: How likely would employers review a CCR in the hiring process?

The Co-Curricular Record helps students identify opportunities and provides them with a tool that encourages them to reflect on their experiences and the competencies developed. Career educators and student life staff often develop programming to help students translate their co-curricular experiences when they enter the hiring process (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). Concurrently, the CCR provides employers with a platform that succinctly highlights skills that they look for, and demonstrates that co-curricular experiences can be used as an indicator to identify desirable qualifications.

This study sought to survey the perceived value and uptake from employers, and to assess if the value is in helping students articulate skills, the record itself, or a combination of both. When looking at how likely they would review the Co-Curricular Record in the following ways, 77% of respondents selected very likely or likely if it was attached to an application, 73% if brought to an interview, and 20% if uploaded on a LinkedIn profile. Through some initial observation, we see some variation across industries in terms of their likelihood to review a CCR in the hiring process. Respondents from Sales & Service appear to be place the most value on extracurricular participation in the current hiring process, and respondents from Natural & Applied Sciences appear to be the least likely review a CCR. However, while there are some
observational differences across industries, a chi-square test reveals that there is in fact no statistical significance across industries in the level of importance they place on extracurricular participation, or the likelihood of reviewing a CCR. Where we do see a difference, is comparing these two questions.

Across the board, we see a shift in the level of importance respondents place on extracurricular participation versus how likely they are to review a CCR in the hiring process. Between these two questions was a description about the CCR, which includes defining extra-/co-curricular, and acknowledging that there are competencies embedded in these opportunities. While 49% of respondents said that extracurricular participation is very important or important, later in the survey, 77% of respondents said they are very likely or likely to review a CCR if attached to an application and 73% if brought to an interview. Looking at a particular industry, such as Business & Finance, while respondents did not place significant importance on extracurricular participation in the current hiring process (41%), 86% of respondents said they are very likely or likely to review a CCR if attached to an application. This suggests that some respondents may not have a clear understanding of what extracurricular participation is, and further interest was expressed once information about co-curricular engagement and the Co-Curricular Record was provided. This supports the argument that employers may not have a clear understanding of what co-curricular is, and that competencies and skills that students can develop from those experiences. With this, 93% of respondents had noted that candidates are able to submit additional documents, which would allow for the opportunity to submit the record. These results demonstrate that employers are open to accepting and reviewing a CCR in the hiring process, and these results are consistent with previous results. Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North (1981), found that 71% of employers indicated that they “would definitely want” or “would prefer to have” a co-curricular transcript included in the job application.
RQ3b: What information on the CCR do employers find most valuable?

Drilling into the specifics of the record, respondents were asked some targeted questions about various aspects of the document. When asked how valuable it would be to include the definitions of the competencies, 68% of respondents selected very valuable or valuable. In Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North (1981), they noted that employers supported the inclusion of some measure of competencies/skills gained. The inclusion of the competencies helps employers understand the language that is being used on the record. While there are a number of terms that may resonate with employers, the competencies/skills framework has a broad scope focused on student learning and development, and defining the competencies would provide some clarity to employers. With this, different institutions use different terminology. An overview of the definitions would provide some context and meaning to the competencies presented.

Bryan, Mann, Nelson and North (1981) found, when asked to indicate the importance of verification, 48% of respondents selected very important or important and 22% selected somewhat important. In this survey, 47% of respondents selected very important or important, with 32% selecting somewhat important. The results from this study are quite similar to those of Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North, which demonstrates that verification may play a more important role for some employers over others. However, both demonstrate that a large majority of employers would find some value in a verified record, with only 21% selecting not important in this study, and 30% in Bryan, Mann, Nelson & North (1981). When asked how valuable it would be to include the description of the validation process, 50% of respondents selected very valuable or valuable, with only 19% selecting not valuable. Respondents also felt that the inclusion of number of hours per activity would be valuable, with only 14% selecting not valuable. The responses to these questions demonstrate respondent’s interest in highlighting relevant
information that would help provide more clarity and context about the activities highlighted on the record, and as well as the record itself. Since the CCR is a relatively new concept, there needs to be an educational piece that is embedded in the record to help employers understand the purpose and meaning of the document.

5.3 Conclusions

Three prominent theoretical frameworks support the benefits and value of co-curricular engagement on student development, success, and retention—Astin’s theory of involvement, Chickering’s theory of identity development, and Tinto’s retention theory. Yet, the existence of the academic transcript as the sole form of assessment, demonstrates the institutional focus on the academic curricula. Brown & Citrin (1977) argued that the unchanging nature of the academic transcript faces challenges in acting as a relevant and useful tool for students, and thus a student development transcript (variation of the Co-Curricular Record) can complement the transcript, and provide a medium to encourage and assess student learning and development. The institutional commitment to developing a program focused on recognizing and assessing co-curricular engagement elevates the importance of those experiences to a myriad of stakeholders—including students, faculty, and employers. Currently, the benefits of co-curricular engagement are not universally understood or accepted. Thus, theories and institutional programs (such as the CCR), validates the value of those experiences, and demonstrates that there are relevant skills that can be developed through those experiences.

When looking at hiring factors, extracurricular participation is not considered one of the more important indicators of an applicant’s qualifications. Instead, employers often focus on previous work experience, references’ feedback, educational degree and/or subject focus. Respondents are looking to these hiring factors as indicators of competencies and skills that they
look for, including communication, professionalism, and teamwork. Yet, while employers are looking for competencies, there are some students who may need help in translating those experiences, where 4% of employers felt students and/or recent graduates do an excellent job at articulating their experiences outside the classroom, 35% selected very good, 49% noted satisfactory, and 12% indicated needs improvement. Therefore, this thesis argues that:

- If employers look for competencies and skills when hiring, AND

- If employers do not necessarily look at extracurricular engagement when hiring, THEN

- Employers often do not view extracurricular participation as a means to develop competencies and skills.

This master’s thesis argues that the Co-Curricular Record can act as a translation tool for both students and employers. For students, the CCR demonstrates that postsecondary institutions consider co-curricular engagement as critical to student success and student development. It encourages and incentivizes engagement, and provides them with a mechanism to explore opportunities that suite their interests. The CCR also acts as a learning tool, helping students be more self-aware and well-versed in the competencies and skills developed, so they can tell their story on their resume, application, and in an interview. Institutions can foster a culture of self-reflection through the CCR, and create intentional programming that helps students translate their co-curricular experiences in the hiring process. For employers, the CCR is a prominent initiative that demonstrates to employers that postsecondary institutions value co-curricular engagement, and view these opportunities as ways to develop competencies and skills. Therefore, employers should be looking to these opportunities as an indicator for the competencies and skills they look for. With this, the CCR acts as a translation tool. It helps
employers understand what co-curricular experiences are, provides a succinct description, and identifies transferable competencies that students developed. Therefore, the CCR can play a role in conveying candidate’s skills and abilities beyond traditional materials by acting as a translation tool.

![Figure 11. “Translation Tool” Venn Diagram.](image)

The CCR can encourage a more holistic approach to the hiring process, where it encourages communication across multiple stakeholders: students, employers, postsecondary institutions, and government. Postsecondary institutions have the opportunity to influence and foster a culture of learning and development, which can help address concerns about a perceived “job skills gap”. This broadens the purpose of an education to include a more well-rounded experience—one where students view co-curricular engagement as complementing their curricular studies. Currently, there is a lot of rhetoric about youth unemployment, underemployment and the job skills gap. Solutions presented in these reports and articles focus on work-integrated learning and experiential opportunities (Council of Ontario Universities, 2014a). Yet, despite these conversations, left out of the equation is the Co-Curricular Record and the role that it can play in tandem with the development of these opportunities. The vast uptake
of the CCR across Canadian universities and colleges warrants a more focused discussion on how the CCR fits into the larger experiential learning rhetoric.

In conclusion, this thesis argues for the need of the Co-Curricular Record, and the important influence it can play in the hiring process. The CCR can act as a translation tool by providing an engagement platform for students that acts as a learning tool in the job search and job preparation process. For students, it acts a reflective tool that helps them identify their skills and interests, which can be used to explore career interests. By encouraging self-awareness, students can use the CCR to reflect on and articulate their experiences, allowing them to craft better resumes and speak to those competencies in the interview. Concurrently, the CCR demonstrates to employers that postsecondary institutions view these experiences as opportunities to develop intentional competencies and skills, thus they should be looking to these experiences in the hiring process. The record provides a succinct overview of co-curricular experiences, and the associated competencies that employers look for. There is potential for the CCR to be incorporated in the hiring process, whether it is used as a job preparation tool or submitted as an additional candidate material in the hiring process. However, while the CCR can act as a learning and translation tool, there are some challenges, including variation and standardization, and shifting a culture.

5.4 Implications

5.4a Variation and Standardization

There are over 40 postsecondary institutions across Canada that have a CCR (or some variation), with many other institutions in the development or exploration phase. All the CCRs
are rooted in encouraging and recognizing student engagement, and premised on the fact that engagement impacts student success and retention. Most institutions market the CCR in a similar way, by encouraging students to articulate experiences and the competencies developed to employers, graduate/professional programs, and for scholarship/award applications (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014; University of Calgary, 2014; University of Toronto, 2014; Wilfrid Laurier University, 2014). Many institutions also connect these opportunities to learning outcomes/competencies/skills, and encourage students to reflect on those skills so they can better articulate and market their experiences.

While CCRs are rooted in similar principles and theories, there is significant variation across institutions. This variation is in the criteria for eligible activities, the competencies/skills used, the validation process, and the format and information presented on the record itself. For instance, some institutions have a minimum time commitment, where opportunities that are less than 20 hours in duration do not qualify for inclusion on the record. Others do not have this requirement, and may include a day-long conference or workshop. Some institutions include paid opportunities, such as on-campus student staff positions, while others do not include any paid opportunities. Some include research and academic service learning, while others state that opportunities cannot be for academic credit. Some have students who can validate their peers for involvement in a particular opportunity, others require that a recognized faculty or staff member act as the validator, and some do not have a validation process at all. In terms of the records themselves, some include a description about the criteria and validation process, and some allow students to write reflective statements on the official record (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). Thus, while rooted in similar core principles, the CCR has been implemented and interpreted in a variety of ways.
The challenge with such variation is that it impacts the value of the program as a whole. While the CCR can act as a translation tool for employers, such variation can cause more confusion than clarity. It is difficult to use the CCR as an evaluation tool in the hiring process, when records look different, include different opportunities, and have varying levels of rigour. There are currently two primary vendors that Canadian institutions have a contract with, Orbis Communications Inc. and Campus Labs/Higher One Inc., with a handful of institutions using homegrown systems. These various systems produce different outputs—both in layout and information provided. For example, Campus Labs/Higher One Inc. allows students to write a reflective sentence on the record, while Orbis Communications Inc. does not. Looking at the activities captured, institutions have different definitions of “co-curricular” and criteria, meaning that one institution may capture an opportunity that another would not. This poses an equity issue across institutions. Those that have more rigorous criteria and standards will have less information included on the record, which means that their students will have less opportunities reflected on the record. Some institutions will only capture opportunities that demonstrate a certain level of learning and development, while others may include workshops that are less than 5 hours. The validation of student participation and the standards that students are held to varies. Therefore, it makes it difficult for an employer to view two records and compare them in the process. It also causes confusion to the employer about what the CCR is, what is included, and the CCRs level of rigour. Thus, it is important that administrators communicate to students that the CCR acts as a tool for students to translate their experiences, however, that the CCR may not be inclusive of all opportunities and that there are limitations.

This variation devalues the CCR program as a whole, since it for stakeholders receiving multiple CCRs, it creates more confusion than clarity. For this reason, CCR professionals across Canada joined together to create a network. Led by the University of Toronto, Dalhousie
University and the University of Mantioba, the network was established in late 2012, and has grown to include 117 professionals from over 55 postsecondary institutions. The purpose of the network is to encourage the sharing of information and best practices, share research, discuss the future of the CCR program in Canada, and to provide a space to discuss questions, comments and concerns (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). The network achieves this purpose by providing a listserv, an online workspace with resources, hosting regional meetings and national summit, and identifying collaborative projects.

One of the more recent initiatives was the first national Co-Curricular Record Summit held by the University of Toronto on May 1-2, 2014. The purpose of the Summit was to encourage networking and the sharing of resources, identifying and recommending some common practices, working to outline some core principles and guidelines, identifying projects and opportunities, and discussing next steps and future directions (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). There were 60 institutions from 43 universities and colleges in attendance, spanning from Vancouver Island University to the University of Prince Edward Island. Attendees engaged in facilitated discussions around: employers, graduate/professional programs, eligibility of activities, validation process, competencies/learning outcomes, marketing, and the CCR document guidelines. During a dot-democracy activity (see Figure 12), attendees were asked to “vote” on the question, “How important is it that we develop, as a network, guidelines for: eligibility of activities, validation process, competencies/learning outcomes, CCR document format, and communications strategy?” The majority of attendees selected very important and important, while a follow up discussion concluded that we need some guidelines that still allow for some institutional variation.
Moving forward, attendees identified a series of next steps, which include developing a national marketing campaign and connecting with government, professional associations, committees and organizations (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). However, while there has been significant ground covered in connecting CCR professionals, the development and promotion of the CCR has occurred through an organic process, which will need support moving forward in order to reach across multiple stakeholder groups.

5.4b Shifting a culture

In almost all instances, the CCR has been spearheaded and developed by student affairs and services—either through the Career Centre or Student Life Office/Department. Some
institutions, such as the University of Toronto, engaged faculties and academic administrators in the development and implementation of the CCR. However, one of the challenges that resides is influencing a shift in culture. Reflecting on the purpose of an education, the academic institution is focused on the academic curriculum. While student affairs and services staff have been preaching the importance of co-curricular engagement for decades, some faculty either do not acknowledge or understand the value of those experiences (Arnold, Burrow, Elias, Vogt & Seifert, 2013). The prominence of the CCR at institutions will start to shift the academic culture, since many institutions are marketing the CCR as a tool to complement the academic transcript (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). This means that students will be encouraged to engage in opportunities beyond the classroom, which may raise some concerns or pushback from faculty who do not see value in such experiences. With this, if we want the CCR to be successful, then it is critical to engage faculty in the process, and to have them as advocates for engagement.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5a Developing national guidelines

The development and work of the CCR Professional Network has been a successful first step in opening up the conversation across Canadian universities and colleges. Through the network, there has been an expressed need to develop some common principles and guidelines that institutions can implement, along with discussing the future of the CCR program in Canada. At the Summit, participants discussed a range of topics, including: stakeholders, research and landscape, eligibility of activities, validation process, marketing and communications, and the CCR document. From this, participants started to identify similarities and differences across programs, and discussed the importance of creating some standards across institutions. As a first
step, most participants agreed that it would be valuable to have an appendix attached to the record, which provides an overview of the criteria and validation process. That way, the structure of the CCR program is clear to the reader, which can help decipher differences across institutions at a quick glance (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). From there, the CCR Professional Network can continue to work towards exploring guidelines around more specific details—including types of opportunities captured.

Part of the process of identifying and developing guidelines, will require increasing coordination and communication with professional associations, registrarial and admissions staff. It is important to identify how the CCR will be used, and to tailor programs with that frame of reference. For example, if a goal is to have graduate and professional programs use the CCR in the admissions process, it is important to understand the level of rigour that they would expect. With this, there are certain practices and processes that registrars use in upholding standards for the academic transcript. Understanding this process, and working with registrars to have a more coordinated approach will also aid in the shaping of the CCR.

In order to facilitate this process, participants of the CCR Summit noted that we should approach various stakeholders in a coordinated fashion. This includes establishing a definition for the CCR, outlining the benefits and goals, and creating generic materials that can be used to promote the CCR program as a whole (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). By developing consistent messaging, it demonstrates the mass interest in the CCR, and institutional attempts at advancing the program as a whole. In order for the CCR to be successful, it is imperative that stakeholders receive a streamlined message, rather than being approached from different institutions with varying messaging.
The first national CCR Summit was the start of developing a coordinated process, and subsequent correspondence and meetings will be required to hone in on developing a coherent and unison approach. With this, while there are a large number of postsecondary institutions that have a CCR and are part of the Professional Network, there are a large number of institutions that have not been included in this process for a number of reasons—including challenges in spreading communication and barriers to adopting the CCR. I recommend that as we move forward, government and education-focused organizations play an active role in the development and implementation of the CCR program in Canada.

5.5b Supporting co-curricular programming and the CCR

The CCR acknowledges that there are benefits to co-curricular engagement on student development, retention, and success. However, there are two barriers that are holding some institutions back—both are rooted in financial constraints. Co-curricular programming is often organized and/or supported by student affairs and services staff. Some institutions have expressed interest in implementing a CCR, however argue that they first need to develop and support a more robust co-curricular program, before they can even develop a CCR (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). This would include developing more leadership programming, residence life programming, and supporting student clubs and organizations—just to name a few. Yet, some institutions simply do not have the resources or staff capacity to expand this portfolio. In addition to developing and supporting programming, there are other associated costs with the CCR.

The CCR requires resources and secured funding for the purchase or development of the system, along with staff time. Most institutions do not have the resources to dedicate a full-time equivalent (FTE) to the CCR, which means it is often added to an already-full and existing
portfolio or alternative methods of funding are required. Other institutions simply cannot dedicate someone to lead the CCR initiative or purchase a system platform and have thus not started to develop or implement the program (Co-Curricular Record Summit, personal communication, May 1-2, 2014). The CCR program has a whole will be less influential if it is not adopted across Canadian institutions, since it will be difficult to incorporate the record in hiring and admissions processes, if not all graduates have access to the program. Thus, it is in the interest of Canadian universities and colleges to lobby for resources and financial incentives, so that all institutions have access to a robust co-curricular program and the CCR.

Since government priorities are focused on encouraging the development of job-ready skills and experiential learning, the CCR can act as a vehicle to help facilitate some of their goals. The CCR directly influences a number of the MTCU priorities, including: encouraging a holistic education and developing job-ready skills; transforming postsecondary system to meet the needs of the innovation economy; fostering a culture of training and continuous learning; tracking outcomes for students over time; and, encouraging minority populations to develop skills (Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, 2013-14). The CCR can be part of a provincial and national strategy to incentivize the development of soft skills in undergraduate and graduate students, and act as a mechanism to help track data overtime. However, the barriers to supporting a holistic education need to be addressed and supported.

I recommend that the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities consider incorporating the CCR in their priorities and messaging. To help facilitate this process, coordinating with the CCR Professional Network will help provide insight into the best ways to move forward, which may include providing financial incentives and grants to further develop co-curricular programming and the CCR. Concurrently, the contacts and resources offered
through the CCR Professional Network can be leveraged to help institutions understand some of the challenges and questions that they need to consider up front. This will help streamline the development process of the CCR, and ensure that Canadian institutions are moving forward in a coordinated effort.

5.5c Communicating benefits

Currently, the CCR is a very grassroots initiative that is being developed and promoted at the local institutional level. The primary institutional focus has been the academic curriculum, and now institutions are working to expand that focus to include engagement in co-curricular opportunities. Through the CCR Summit, there were conversations about working together to promote the CCR through a national video and campaign, and some institutions have started to engage in pulling together the pieces for this campaign. An educational campaign should be supported by the efforts of government and government agencies. This would include promoting the value of co-curricular engagement and the CCR in the hiring process. This would require liaising and communicating with industries, and ensuring that there is a succinct and clear message that is being promoted.

There has been a lot of attention in the media about the value of a postsecondary education and the importance of job-ready skills. University of Toronto President Meric Gertler (2014), wrote an article titled “Job Ready: U of T is developing new programs to help students succeed after graduation,” where he highlights initiatives, such as the Co-Curricular Record. In the article, he counters that notion that universities are either in the business of providing an education or job training—President Gertler asserts that universities do both. He acknowledges the concern about whether an investment in a university education will pay off, and states that the institution is investing resources to strengthen students’ education, “We want to encourage
our students to think strategically about how they can leverage all of their university experiences.” The Council for Ontario Universities published a report, “Bringing Life to Learning at Ontario Universities,” which argues for student engagement in experiential learning opportunities, which helps students develop transferable competencies and job-ready skills (Council of Ontario Universities, 2014a). Articles from senior administration, such as U of T President Gertler’s, and reports that highlight the value of experiential learning, all contribute to an emerging rhetoric—the importance a well-rounded experience and co-curricular engagement in impacting student development and success. There is an need for more intentional and coordinated messaging directed at different stakeholders, including employers, professional associations, parents, and students.

5.5d Research and assessment

There are a number of studies that demonstrate the impact of co-curricular engagement on student development and retention (Astin, 1993; Chickering, 1969; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1987), yet there is a need to conduct relevant research in the Canadian context. There is a wealth of data that can be exported from Co-Curricular Record systems, which can be analyzed in a variety of ways.

The CCR can be used to help assess the impact of co-curricular engagement, and its impact on student success and retention. While a proper protocol would need to be followed, there is the potential to use data from the CCR and map it against aggregate grade point averages and graduation rates. This data can be used to assess if there is an impact of engagement on academic success and retention. Data can also be used to see which students are involved, and which are not. Follow up assessment can help explore barriers to engagement, and identify opportunities for growth and program development. Career Services can use the CCR and
conduct follow up assessments with recent graduates to see if the CCR helped them acquire a job. They can use these success stories to help further the CCR program, and to demonstrate to students the importance of developing competencies and skills. As the CCR continues to develop and students go through an entire cycle of having a CCR, it would be interesting to assess whether employers see an increase in qualified candidates among students and recent graduates.

There is a wealth of data in CCR systems that can be sliced and analyzed in a variety of ways. What is required is an in-depth discussion about how we will assess the CCR program, and how the data will be used and analyzed. To do so, we need to increase the capacity of staff to be able to conduct assessments and to run reports on CCR data. With this, cross-institutional research and assessment will provide some insight into the value of the program as a whole. I recommend that a research plan be developed in concert with government officials and researchers from education-focused organizations.

5.6 Next Steps

Moving forward, it is important that the Co-Curricular Record continues to develop and be communicated in a more coordinated effort. This includes fostering a community of support across postsecondary institutions, while providing intentional opportunities to discuss the development of guidelines and standards. This will require consulting with various stakeholders and organizations, including government, education-focused organizations (such as COU), employer associations, registrar associations, and professional faculty admissions staff. At the institutional level, the CCR should be promoted as a learning tool for students, where career educators help students reflect on the competencies and skills and translate those skills to their resume or prepare for an interview. Concurrently, institutions can start to engage their employer network through providing educational materials, which highlight the benefits of the co-
curricular engagement and the CCR. Throughout this process, it is important to be intentional about the CCR, and continue to assess its value.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates the value in developing a Co-Curricular Record, and the potential value it can play in the hiring process. However, in order to successfully integrate the CCR in the hiring process, we need to develop national guidelines, support co-curricular programming and the CCR, communicate benefits, and conduct further research and assessment.
References

Arnold, C., Burrow, J., Elias, K., Vogt, K., & Seifert, T. (2013, June). Two roads met in a yellow wood: Faculty and student affairs perceptions of student success. Presentation for the annual conference of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, Montreal, QB.


Appendices

Appendix A: Invitation Letter

Subject line: Employer Survey: Hiring Process and the Co-Curricular Record

We would like to invite you to participate in a research study that is focused on what employers value in the hiring processes of students and recent graduates and a new University of Toronto program. The University is currently introducing a “Co-Curricular Record”, an initiative across our three campuses that will provide students with a database to search for experiences beyond the classroom, link those experiences to competencies, and receive validation for completion of those experiences on an official institutional document. Students will be encouraged to articulate and market these experiences and skills when applying for jobs. The purpose of this study is to better understand employer perceptions of current hiring practices and the Co-Curricular Record. Results from employer perceptions and understanding of the CCR, will be used to tailor upcoming UofT Career Centres programming as appropriate.

This survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary, and we will respect the confidentiality of your responses. We ask that you complete the survey only once. To access the survey please click the link below. If the survey does not open automatically, please copy and paste the following link to your internet browser’s address bar.

[link]

This study is led by a staff member from the University of Toronto who is conducting this study in partial completion of a Master’s thesis at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. This study being conducted in partnership with the UofT Career Centres,

Please help us better understand the current hiring process and your perceptions of the Co-Curricular Record program so that we can better serve our students.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Elias, Ontario Institute for Students in Education/University of Toronto

University of Toronto Career Centres
Appendix B: Welcome Screen

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study.

The following survey will ask you questions about current hiring practices and your perceptions of the new Co-Curricular Record program that the University of Toronto is launching in the fall of 2013.

We intend to use the results from the survey in three ways: 1) for the Career Centre to better understand current hiring practices; 2) for the University of Toronto more broadly in the development and communication of the new Co-Curricular Record program; and 3) for a graduate thesis.

You have been invited to participate in this study as an employer in the University of Toronto Career Centre database. A representative sample has been selected based on industry type and size. This survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. By clicking “next” you are consenting to participate in this study.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and we will respect the confidentiality of your responses. We ask that you complete the survey only once, and you may choose to withdraw from participating at any time without any consequences, penalty, and judgment, and at no time will be at risk of harm. No identifiable questions will be asked, and your identity will remain confidential. You may terminate your participation at any point but because of the anonymous nature of the survey, we are not able to remove your responses once they are submitted, and the primary investigator retains the right to use the data collected up to the point of termination. All responses will be maintained in an encrypted secure environment. A link to a summary of the results of the data collected will be distributed to the invited participants. Invited participants will also be informed when a copy of the thesis is available electronically in the University of Toronto Research Repository (T Space) at https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca.

This study is led by a staff member from the University of Toronto who is conducting this study in partial completion of a Master’s thesis at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. If you have any questions regarding the content of the survey or the ways in which we intend to use the data you can contact Kimberly Elias at kimberly.elias@utoronto.ca. The study is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tricia Seifert, who can be contacted at tricia.seifert@utoronto.ca. The Research Ethics Board at the University of Toronto has reviewed and approved this study. If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study please or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

Thank you for your participation in a study that will support both our students and employer partners.

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Please print a copy of this letter for your records.
Appendix C: Survey Protocol

Part. I: Current Hiring Practices

1. A. In your current hiring practice, what materials are candidate’s required to submit? Please check all that apply.

- [ ] Application Form
- [ ] Cover Letter
- [ ] Resume
- [ ] Academic Transcript
- [ ] Writing Sample
- [ ] Other: _______________

B. Can candidates submit additional documentation?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

2. How important are the following in your hiring decisions (scale: very important to not important, or not applicable)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application Form</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cover letter</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resume</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Transcript</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Sample</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn Profile</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Profile (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. A. Please select which of the following competencies or skills you look for when hiring.

- Goal-setting and prioritization
- Decision-making and action
- Communication
- Technological aptitude
- Career planning
- Health promotion
- Project management
- Fostering inclusivity and equity
- Advocacy
- Community and civic engagement
- Global perspective and engagement
- Social intelligence
- Teamwork
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Self-awareness
- Social identity awareness
- Commitment to ethics and integrity
- Spiritual awareness
- Creative expression
- Personal health management
- Critical thinking
- Reflective thinking
- Strategic thinking
- Design thinking
- Systems thinking
- Inquiry
- Synthesizing information
- Knowledge creation and innovation
- Knowledge application to daily life

B. Reflecting on the applications you have received from students and/or recent graduates, how would you rate their ability to describe the competencies and skills developed outside the classroom?

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Satisfactory
- Needs Improvement
4. How important are the following factors when reviewing candidate materials in the hiring process (scale: very important to not important)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Degree</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Subject Focus</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Work Experience</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Participation</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards/Official Recognition</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References’ Feedback</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. A. Do you follow up with references?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

B. If yes, do you seek to verify applicant’s extracurricular participation?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

C. Would you be interested in having a means to verify extracurricular participation?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
Part. II: Co-Curricular Record

This next section describes the Co-Curricular Record (CCR) program at the University of Toronto. In the following paragraphs, a description of the program is provided, along with a link to a sample record. A series of questions are then asked to gain feedback on your perceptions of the CCR program.

The University of Toronto is committed to student success and the student experience, and is developing the Co-Curricular Record (CCR) program to encourage a more robust and holistic university experience. The CCR is a program that encourages engagement in co-curricular activities, which research has shown to positively impact student learning and development.

Types of Activities

Often referred to as extracurricular, co-curricular refers to university-affiliated activities that are outside the academic curricula, and provide opportunities for intentional learning and development. While you may know this as extracurricular, overtime postsecondary institutions have started to adopt the word “co-curricular” to signify that these experiences should be part of the academic experience. Types of activities that may be captured include: leadership opportunities (orientation, residence life, student clubs & government, etc.), mentorship opportunities, community outreach and volunteerism, international experiences, athletics (intramural councils and varsity athletics), positions on formal boards and committees, and work-study positions. The CCR provides a database of activities that allows students to search for opportunities beyond the classroom. Competencies and skills are linked to each activity, which will help students see the connection between their engagement and development. Students will be encouraged to reflect on the competencies and skills gained through their experience. These experiences and competencies are then printed on an official institutional document (see sample below).

Validation

To have an activity added to the CCR database, a staff/faculty member is required to fill out an application form and identify the competencies students develop in that activity. The application is submitted to a Local Evaluation Committee, which will be committees around campus that will be comprised of staff, faculty, and students. Local Evaluation Committees will determine if the activity meets the following criteria: 1) attached to the university, 2) recognized staff/faculty validator, 3) intentional competencies/skills, and 4) active engagement. Each activity must have an approved staff or faculty member to act as the validator. Once an activity has been added to the database and student participation in that activity has been completed, the validator is required to approve which students completed the activity. Students will be encouraged to speak about their experience further in their resume or interview.

The CCR program is currently being developed and will launch in the 2013-2014 year for all degree-seeking students across the three U of T campuses. For more information on the CCR and its development, visit ccr.utoronto.ca.
The University of Toronto recognizes that students are involved in a variety of activities, both on and off-campus. This Co-Curricular Record captures a select set of activities that have been approved by the university and validated by a recognized staff or faculty member. Only activities from the 2011-2012 school year onward are captured on this record.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Purpose &amp; Description</th>
<th>Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>University Affairs Board, UofT Governing Council</td>
<td>Student Representative</td>
<td>One of the three boards of the U of T’s Governing Council, members of the board engage in critical discussion about matters that concern the student and campus life of a non-academic nature.</td>
<td>Leadership, Self-Awareness, Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>Residence Life, Victoria College</td>
<td>Residence Assistant (RA)</td>
<td>RAs are assigned to over 40 students, to whom they are required to provide personal and academic support. RAs go through extensive training and act as a conduit to services at the university.</td>
<td>Interdependence, Social Intelligence, Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>Intramural Sports Council (ISC)</td>
<td>Women’s ISC Chair</td>
<td>Facilitate discussions on the best way to implement improvements to the intramural program for 400+ athletes. Member of the review board and awards committee.</td>
<td>Decision-making, Leadership, Critical Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>Orientation Committee</td>
<td>Executive Member</td>
<td>Worked in a team to deliver activities to orient the transition of incoming students to university. Engaged in planning events, risk assessment, managing budgets, training volunteers, responding to crisis situations, and providing support for incoming students.</td>
<td>Program Management, Interdependence, Understanding Diversity, while Fostering Inclusivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In witness thereof this signature confirms the authenticity of this record: May 27, 2013

Jill Matus  
Vice-Provost, Students & First-Entry Division  
University of Toronto

This is an official co-curricular record. To confirm the authenticity of this record please visit ccr.utoronto.ca and enter code: 12345678
6. A. Have you received a Co-Curricular Record (CCR) in the hiring process?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

   B. If yes, how useful did you find the information on the CCR in making a hiring decision?
      ☐ Very useful
      ☐ Useful
      ☐ Somewhat useful
      ☐ Not at all useful

   C. If no, how useful would you find the information on the CCR in making a hiring decision?
      ☐ Very useful
      ☐ Useful
      ☐ Somewhat useful
      ☐ Not at all useful

7. How likely would you review a student and/or recent graduate’s CCR in the hiring process in the following ways (scale: very likely to not at all)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attached to an Application</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brought to Interview</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uploaded to LinkedIn Profile</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. If you received a Co-Curricular Record, what format would you prefer?
   ☐ CCR printed through the university’s Transcript Office
   ☐ A secure PDF CCR printed by the student

9. How important is it that each co-curricular activity highlighted on the Co-Curricular Record is verified by a university staff or faculty member?
   ☐ Very important
   ☐ Important
   ☐ Somewhat Important
   ☐ Not Important
10. On the official CCR, to what extent do you find the following information valuable (scale: valuable to not valuable).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role/Position Held in Activity</th>
<th>Very Valuable</th>
<th>Valuable</th>
<th>Somewhat Valuable</th>
<th>Not Valuable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Activity</th>
<th>Very Valuable</th>
<th>Valuable</th>
<th>Somewhat Valuable</th>
<th>Not Valuable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highlighted Competencies/Skills</th>
<th>Very Valuable</th>
<th>Valuable</th>
<th>Somewhat Valuable</th>
<th>Not Valuable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. How valuable would it be to include the following additional information on the Co-Curricular Record?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Hours Per Activity</th>
<th>Very Valuable</th>
<th>Valuable</th>
<th>Somewhat Valuable</th>
<th>Not Valuable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions of Competencies/Skills</th>
<th>Very Valuable</th>
<th>Valuable</th>
<th>Somewhat Valuable</th>
<th>Not Valuable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Validation Process</th>
<th>Very Valuable</th>
<th>Valuable</th>
<th>Somewhat Valuable</th>
<th>Not Valuable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. What type of organization do you work for?
- [ ] For Profit
- [ ] Non-Profit
- [ ] Government

13. Which category best describes your organization’s industry?
- [ ] Accounting Services
- [ ] Agriculture, Forestry & Fishery
- [ ] Architectural, Landscape & Interior Design Services
- [ ] Arts, Entertainment & Recreation
- [ ] Banking & Financial Services
- [ ] Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals
- [ ] Business Services - Other
- [ ] Communications, Media & Public Relations
- [ ] Computer, Information and Internet Services
☐ Construction
☐ Education
☐ Employment & Human Resources Services
☐ Energy & Utilities
☐ Engineering & Environmental Services
☐ Government
☐ Health & Social Services
☐ Insurance
☐ Legal & Security Services
☐ Management Consulting
☐ Manufacturing
☐ Mining, Oil & Gas
☐ Non-Profit & Non-Government Organizations
☐ Personal Services
☐ Printing, Publishing
☐ Real Estate & Property Management
☐ Retail
☐ Scientific Research & Development
☐ Supply Chain, Logistics & Transportation
☐ Telecommunications
☐ Travel, Hospitality & Food Services

14. How many employees work for your organization?
☐ 1-4 employees
☐ 5-99 employees
☐ 100-499 employees
☐ 500+ employees

15. What type of employment is your organization hiring students or recent graduates? Please check all that apply.
☐ Summer employment
☐ Full-time employment
☐ Part-time employment
☐ Co-op/Internship
Appendix D: Reminder Email

Subject line: Employer Survey: Hiring Process and the Co-Curricular Record

Recently, you were invited to participate in a 5-10 minute survey focused on what employers value in the hiring processes of students and recent graduates and the new University of Toronto Co-Curricular Record program. Your response is very important since you were selected to participate as a representative from your industry, and the results from the survey will be used by the Career Centres to better understand employer perceptions about the Co-Curricular Record and tailor student programming as appropriate, and to inform the development of the Co-Curricular Record program.

If you have already completed the survey, we thank you for your time. If you have not completed the survey, we would appreciate if you could spend a few minutes of your time to contribute to this research study.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and we will respect the confidentiality of your responses. We ask that you complete the survey only once. The Career Centre will notify you when the results are available.
To access the survey please click the link below. If the survey does not open automatically, please copy and paste the following link to your internet browser’s address bar.

[link]

Sincerely,

Kimberly Elias, Ontario Institute for Students in Education, University of Toronto

University of Toronto Career Centres