



The Council of
Independent Colleges

Building Places
of Promise:
**Unlocking
Student
Success**

2025 Institute for Chief Academics Officers with
Chief Student Affairs Officers and Chief Student Success Officers
November 1–4, 2025 🗝️ JW Marriott, Indianapolis, IN

Work-Based Learning for All: Using Technology to Build a More Equitable Career Preparation



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Building Places of Promise:
Unlocking Student Success

Presenters

- Dr. Shatrela Washington-Hubbard
Dean of the College of Business & Communication
Brenau University
- Dr. Mara Woody
Director, Strategic Partnerships
Riipen
- Dr. Mike Fried
Senior Researcher
Ithaka S+R
- Dr. Emily Carpenter
Associate Vice President for Experiential Impact in Academic Affairs
Nazareth University
- Dr. Joi Sampson
Assistant Provost for Academic Engagement
Mercy University



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Building Places of Promise:
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Our mission:

To eliminate underemployment.

Riipen is the world's leading work-based learning platform connecting higher education institutions with thousands of employers.

We facilitate equitable work-integrated learning experiences that drive better learner engagement and employability outcomes.

The world's leading work-based learning platform:



272,000+

Learner experiences



700+

Academic partners



11,000+

Educators



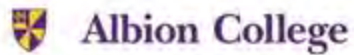
44,000+

Employers



CIC WBL Consortium x Riipen.

Member schools.



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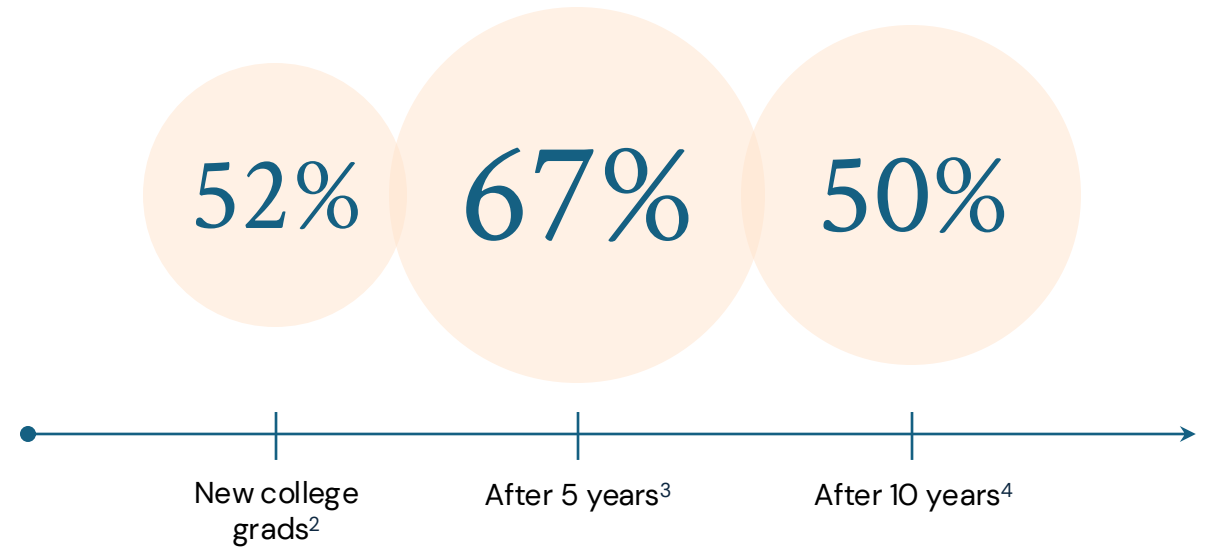
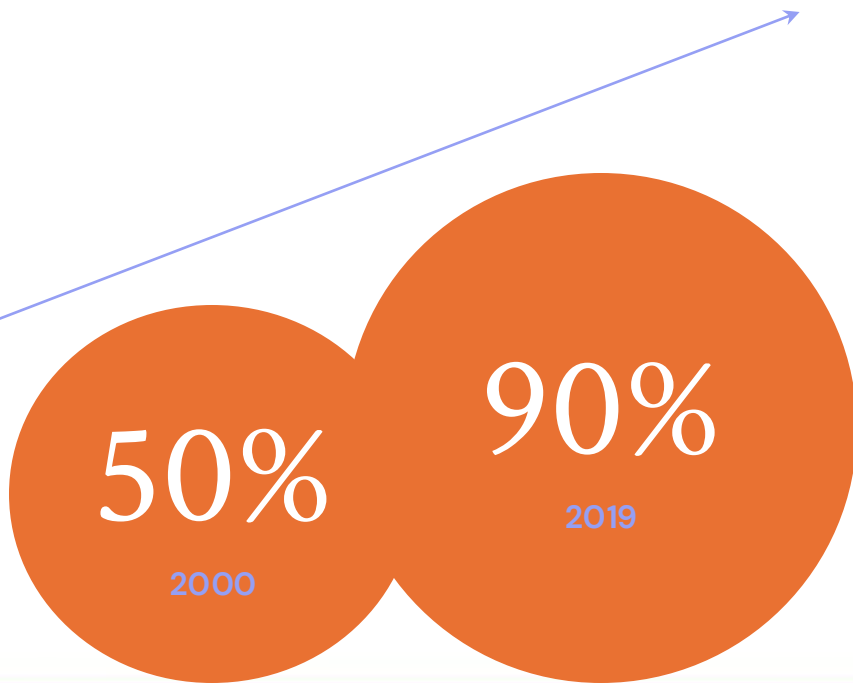
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What happens without employer-relevant skills?

Students who reported **employment/income** as primary or sole motivation for commencing post-secondary education.¹



UNDEREMPLOYMENT RATES

Strada Education Foundation and The Burning Glass Institute

Professionally, outcomes are sobering.

More than half of recent 4-Year college grads are underemployed.

52%

of recent four-year college graduates are underemployed a year after they graduate.

45%

of four-year college graduates still don't hold a job that requires a four-year degree 10 years after graduation.

73%

of graduates who were underemployed in their first jobs remained so 10 years after they graduated.

Source: [Talent Disrupted Report by Strada Education Foundation and The Burning Glass Institute](#)



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State of experiential learning in higher education.

The Business Higher Education Forum's September 2024 Expanding Internships report found the alarming lack of supply for learners to secure internship opportunities, especially for underserved populations.

While an estimated **8.2 million** learners wanted an internship opportunity, only **3.6 million** were able to secure one.

Of these internships, only **2.5 million** were considered quality internships.

Source: https://www.bhef.com/sites/default/files/BHEF_Expanding_Internships.pdf

Key Experiential Learning Terms: Definitions & Landscape

Note: There are no universally accepted definitions. Practices and labels vary across institutions—think “wild west!”

- **Experiential Learning:** Learning through hands-on projects, work, or community activities with structured reflection.
- **Internships:** Supervised work experiences—often off-campus—designed for skill-building and career exposure.
- **Project-Based Learning (PBL):** Students tackle real-world questions or challenges in projects, often presenting results publicly.
- **Employer-Engaged PBL:** Projects co-designed or assessed with employers, focusing on current industry or organizational needs.



The power of project-based learning.

Longitudinal study of MIT's NEET program dramatically higher employment and workplace readiness rates among past PBL students, with 80% in full-time positions utilizing their qualifications compared to just 28% of traditionally schooled peers.*

A meta analysis found that project-based learning may significantly improve students' learning outcomes compared with traditional teaching models.**

Another study found a positive association between work-based course taking in college and probability of employment after degree completion (two-year and four-year degree completers), and a positive association with post-degree earnings among four-year completers.***

Riipen



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Employers believe in the power of education and project-based learning.

Percentages of employers who indicated they would be “much more” likely to consider a job candidate with particular experiences.



Helpful characteristics of a “well-rounded” education that enable college graduates to succeed in the workforce.



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It is imperative opportunities be created for all learners to access world-readiness skill building

- Project-based, work-integrated experiential learning opportunities embedded within the curriculum
- Opportunity to work in teams to develop and apply the liberal arts and human-centric skills learning in the classroom setting
- Inquiry and problem-based learning that untaps creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, and continuous refinement
- Feedback from employers and faculty so learners know areas in which they excel and areas to focus growth



When experience changes lives.



"In the working world, the success of an employer is a team effort. This project was a great experience for those who have never worked as a team previously. It is necessary to be patient, tolerant, and respectful when working together with a team. Participating in a team project is valuable exposure to actual group work. There is give and take and in order to be fair, everyone should contribute equally to the work. You need to take into account another person's situation. Maybe they can't get things done as quickly as you expect, because they have sick children, their own illness, other more pressing assignments, personal circumstances, like the death of a family member, and so many other scenarios. I was impressed by one of my team who offered to help another team member with her part. This is true teamwork."

Cynthia Johnson

Student, First Nations University of Canada



"The Clean Divorce Project has given me valuable insights into the challenges families face during divorce, especially with children involved. It was eye-opening, as I hadn't personally observed these hardships before. Through research, I learned how emotionally challenging divorce is and that support includes emotional as well as financial help. Riipen is a great pathway for students to build knowledge and understanding."

Reshma Mariam John Muthakottu

Student, Humber College



"I worked on a school project with a company making environmentally friendly pads for donation. We utilized the farmer's market and repurposed leftover materials into new items to sell, contributing to donations. Ultimately, we funded 1,000 pads to donate to young girls in Ethiopia. Given rising inflation and poverty, it was rewarding to see our efforts make a meaningful impact."

Annie Shimo

Student, University of Toronto



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Formative Evaluation Results

Dr. Michael Fried
Ithaka S+R



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Who We Are



We help academic and cultural communities know what is coming next, learn from rigorous and well-designed research studies, and adapt to new realities and opportunities.



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Data Collection Methods

Students

- Start-of-Course Surveys
- End-of-Course Surveys
- Post-Graduation Focus Groups
- Administrative Data

Instructors

- Course Prep Focus Groups
- Course Delivery Focus Groups
- End-of-Course Surveys



The Student Experience

- Students most valued the opportunity to apply classroom concepts in real world contexts
- Students reported growth in communication, teamwork, and professionalism skills
- Students had the best experience when WBL was well-integrated into the course structure
- Support from instructors enhanced students' confidence in professional settings
- Students requested more actionable feedback from employers



The Student Experience

- Students requested more actionable feedback from employers
- Some students reported their WBL activities feeling “like a separate class” when projects were not well-aligned to course content
- WBL was helpful in reflecting on what they wanted to do, what they did not want to do, and where they might want to go post-college



The Instructor Experience

- Most instructors saw substantial benefits for students, noting that ‘students take partner projects more seriously’ than regular assignments
- Instructors found onboarding to the Riipen platform effective, but consistently struggled to find employer opportunities matched to their courses
- Instructors were often challenged in managing unexpected communication breakdowns with employers, which could have an impact on student projects



The Instructor Experience

- Returning instructors were more confident and effective in Year 2, reporting better employer matching and stronger grading strategies
- Though underutilized, instructors involved in the CIC Community of Practice, or who engaged with campus-based peers, found such networks helpful for refining course design and assessment practices



Key Takeaways

WBL enhanced student engagement, expanded skill development, and career adaptably

Instructor preparation and institutional support are critical for success

Employer partnerships require alignment with course goals and should be established early



Nazareth University

Nazareth has had an experiential learning (EL) requirement as part of their revised core curriculum since 2010. All undergraduate students at Nazareth can choose from eight pathways when fulfilling their Experiential Learning (EL) requirement. All experiences meet the common criteria from the Society for Experiential Education's eight guiding principles:

- International Experiences
- Internships
- Mentored Creative Activity
- Non-credit Bearing Community Engaged Learning
- Credit Bearing Community Engaged Learning
- Research
- Student Leadership
- Field and Clinical Experiences

Our partnership with Riipen has allowed us to increase course-integrated experiential learning.



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Nazareth University (cont.)

Riipen courses have represented several majors and programs at Nazareth including:

- SQL and Data Representations for an Equitable World, TAS 293
- Psychological Interventions, PSY 353
- Advanced Advertising Design, AVCD 351
- Communication and Media Senior Seminar, COMM 450
- Sustainable Development, Technology, and Society, SOC 407
- Advanced Accounting, ACT 455

My Life as a **Flyer** Naz.edu Request Info Visit Campus

Home > Career Prep > Dark tours, archives, and student teaching

Dark tours, archives, and student teaching

May 27, 2025

Three community experiences spurred me personally and professionally

By Salvatore "Torre" DiFilippo

Three experiences out in the community during college have changed how I thought, communicated, and saw education. Each pushed my boundaries beyond the classroom into real-world situations that ultimately benefited my college experience. They didn't just supplement my education, they helped transition me to become better personally and professionally.



The image shows a man in a grey polo shirt standing in front of a whiteboard and a projector screen. The screen displays a "SELF-REFLECTION" slide with three prompts: "THINK OF A TIME IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU WERE FACED WITH A CHALLENGE...BUT OVERCAME IT.", "THINK OF A TIME IN SCHOOL WORK WHERE YOU WERE CHALLENGED...BUT OVERCAME IT.", and "THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOU WERE TOLD BY SOMEONE THAT YOU COULD NOT, WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING...BUT WERE ABLE TO FIND SUCCESS." The whiteboard behind him has various papers and a first aid kit attached to it.

The Razor Detailer

As far as I am concerned, I'm never going back to traditional razors...

1/3 The Size **Packs - a - Punch!**

Introducing the NEW detail razor, designed to tackle those hard-to-reach areas with precision. Crafted with convenience in mind, this disposable razor features just two blades for precise shaves every time. Say goodbye to missed spots and hello to a smoother finish. Try it today for a grooming experience like no other.

Zing!

The detail razor is perfect for those hard to reach places when trying to get a detailed shave. Next time you go to buy your favorite disposable razor, look for the additional razor that is a third the size of traditional razors, included with the package. We look forward to being part of your next shave and in the near future.

Look SHARP! Feel SHARP! Be SHARP!

Use The Razor Detailer disposable razor for the SHARPEST shave of your life



The advertisement features a cartoon character holding a razor, a close-up of the razor head, and a full razor. The text emphasizes its compact size (1/3 the size of traditional razors) and precision. The brand logo 'RD' is visible in the bottom right corner.



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Mercy University and Work-Based Learning

Data Analytics

Global Health

Health Science

Data Science

Management

Project Focus Areas

Designed tools, resources, and strategic frameworks to support and empower entrepreneurs from socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

Developed patient-centered approaches to strengthen family support systems and promote culturally responsive care practices.

Conducted feasibility studies and proposed innovative solutions to enhance business collaboration between urban and rural networks.

Advocated for ethical business development practices across organizations to promote sustainable and responsible growth.



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Making Meaning through Work-Based Learning

Students

- Experienced enhanced skill development without monetary strain or other barriers helping to close equity gaps
- Broadened access to high-impact learning opportunities and greater career preparation

Faculty

- Rewarding to watch students engage so deeply with issues that impact many. This broadened their perspectives on how local and global challenges are interconnected
- Appreciated employer sharing their career journey, offering students valuable insights into industry and various career trajectories

Employer

- Students demonstrated thoughtfulness and intellectual maturity with complex and culturally sensitive topics
- Made strong effort to connect insights back to the lived experiences of real people



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Q&A



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Thank you for attending this session!



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