



THE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE INITIATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

• AN EVALUATION •

In the summer of 2007, Community Experience Initiative (CEI) embarked on an externally driven evaluation of its internship program, the results of which will help feed its thinking regarding leadership succession and strategic planning. The evaluation involved 27 phone interviews with a carefully selected mix of alumni, host organizations, career centres, funders, and long-time supporters, as well as a more quantitative-focused web survey of the entire alumni base. In the following pages, we highlight the key discoveries that emerged from the process.

Thank you to all who participated in the evaluation. We appreciate the time you took to share your thoughts. If you have any additional comments, please do share them: kariann@cei-iec.ca

I. CEI's VALUE ADDED

- **CEI is well respected and seen as providing an essential and unique service.** Almost all evaluation respondents said that they would be disappointed if CEI were to “disappear tomorrow.” They also emphasized that developing stronger ties between the community sector and business students is important for the health of Canadian society because it contributes to a more humane business sector and spurs social innovation. Others added that if CEI were to fold, there was no doubt in their mind that something similar would take its place.

- **Alumni appreciate that through CEI they received concrete confirmation that the community sector values their business skills.**

- **Host organizations value the role that CEI has played in helping them examine key strategic issues more deeply and in new ways.**

- **Career centres see CEI as positively contributing to their menu of services in several ways:**
 - “Applications to investment banks and other more traditional business jobs are down. The Gen Ys are looking for a lot more than money and simply working for a huge corporation.”

 - “CEI internship postings represent 10% percent of our summer opportunities.”

 - “60% of our students are international and it is often easier to find internships for them in sectors that are more open to international experience, like the nonprofit sector.”

 - “We don’t have a career advisor focused on the nonprofit sector. CEI fills that void.”

- **Long-time supporters see CEI contributing to the development of a highly skilled, young labour force that is able to migrate and communicate between sectors.**

- **Most people don’t know that one of CEI’s core goals is to have an impact on the way that business schools operate.** When asked why the CEI internship program exists, only two respondents mentioned the goal of bringing change to business schools.

II. CEI's IMPACT

- **Alumni who responded to our on-line survey (to which there was a 60% response rate) said that they have been affected by their internship in the following ways:**
 - 93% are involved in the community sector, of which 43% say they are MORE involved than before their internship.
 - 84% are thinking differently about their career.
 - 67% are more generally aware of community sector issues in Canada than they were before their internship.
 - 67% of those working in the private sector are able to engage with the community sector through their work.
 - 62% feel a higher sense of commitment to the community sector.
 - 28% are employed by their host organization or another nonprofit.

- **Host Organizations credit CEI for enabling them to:**
 - Make significant structural changes to their programming;
 - Produce and implement a marketing plan;
 - Create a permanent marketing position;
 - Realize projects that had been laying dormant for years;
 - Integrate the hiring of a business student into their yearly budgeting process; and/or
 - Develop a business plan, which led to funding.

- **Career centers and business schools are not focusing more deliberately on the community sector as a result of their partnership with CEI.** They all said that if CEI stopped, the opportunities for students would also stop. However, two types of changes linked to CEI's involvement were mentioned: More student club activity and 2) An increased and improved profile within their community (i.e., perceived as having a focus on more than just finance).

III. CEI's STRENGTHS

- **CEI has developed a model that works well and that all partners know how to work within. The following are the aspects of CEI's internship program that are most valued:**
 - The sole focus on business students.
 - The focus on both undergraduate and graduate students.
 - The geographic spread and variety of internships offered.
 - Offering internships that involve work that is of high importance to the host organizations.
 - The stream-lined and easy-to-understand nature of the program.
 - The strong lines of communication with all its stakeholders.
 - The evaluation component of internships.
 - Opportunities for alumni to meet each other face-to-face.
 - Annual, student-organized career fairs.
 - The formalized pre-screening process for selecting interns.
 - Allowing host organizations to have control over the final selection process.
 - Sharing the cost of the internship between the host organization and a funder.

IV. SUGGESTED STRATEGIC SHIFTS

- **The most widely suggested strategic shift was to make CEI an integral and sustained part of business school curricula.** Long-time funders were particularly adamant about this point. The following key strategies were offered:
 - Prioritize relationship-building with Dean's offices.
 - Place more focus on supporting student advocacy since students have a strong influence on Dean's offices.
 - Involve faculty members as internship advisors and as partners.
 - Advocate for specialized courses in nonprofit management.
 - Show how the CEI internship is more than simply a summer job.

- **The majority of alumni were interested in expanding CEI's services beyond internships and career fairs.** The most popular suggestion was to help alumni explore jobs and career paths in the community sector. The following strategies were suggested, indicating a strong interest in turning CEI into a membership-based organization for alumni:
 - Send out job postings.
 - Create an on-line interface to facilitate networking across Canada and organize yearly or bi-yearly alumni networking events.
 - Distribute a regular newsletter.
 - Offer discounts on professional development events and memberships.
 - Help alumni connect to community sector networks. For example, create a mentoring program between nonprofit leaders and alumni.
 - Educate the community sector about the benefits of hiring business school graduates.
 - Establish a CEI consulting arm.

All of the alumni we spoke to said they would pay an annual membership fee if the range and value of the services offered were significant enough.

V.SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

- **Improve outreach and recruitment:**
 - Increase outreach within business schools by involving interns, alumni, and active student groups as ambassadors of CEI and by holding community sector awareness events throughout the year.
 - Emphasize the learning component of the internship in CEI's advertising.
 - Advertise the internship as a learning opportunity for those interested in eventually working as consultants.
 - Recruit earlier, at the same time that private companies recruit.
 - Develop more descriptive job postings to increase their appeal.
 - Develop screening criteria that are more aligned with the specific needs of each host organization.

- **Improve the quality of the internship experience:**
 - Hold general pre-placement orientation sessions and post-placement debriefing sessions for groups of interns.
 - Require that host organizations and interns develop learning objectives and agree on outcomes together at the start of the internship.
 - Engage alumni as mentors throughout the internship.
 - Ensure that host organizations can provide interns with adequate support over the summer months.

- **Expand the internship program.** Suggestions included engaging more business schools, students, and host organizations; stretching out the length of internships; increasing the number of social enterprise host organizations; and reaching out to new partners, such as Boards of Trade.

- **Develop a stronger and more diversified funding stream.** Career centres suggested charging annual fees and developing fundraising partnerships with Development and Alumni Relations teams.