

SOUNDINGS



Career Integrated Learning

The world of marine education is complex and interdisciplinary. It involves ocean technology, fisheries, shipping, and maritime studies, to name just a few. Within all of these fields of education, study, and research lies a common denominator – the future of the field.

In terms of marine education, there has not been a significant conversation regarding the competencies we would like our students to embrace. Student competencies are critical to the future of oceans research. We tend to rely on training but what do we want to embrace with respect to the competencies of new graduates? Our industry, academic, and community partners want students to have the technical training but also the ability to think critically. We want students to be critical thinkers and to embrace the concepts of leadership, but we are challenged to determine where these occur in the curriculum.

Marine education should be about a holistic approach to student learning – not just the traditional focus on classroom experience at the 18-24 age demographic, but rather lifelong learning for all aspects of the continuum. The requirement for competencies continues to evolve and so must our focus on marine education. We need to critically examine what industry would like from our graduates and ensure that in all aspects of curriculum development we aspire to including those competencies to allow our graduates to continue to thrive and succeed in a changing economy.

The opportunity to develop competencies that include critical thinking, leadership, teamwork, interpersonal, and many others all include a requirement for educational institutions to partner with industry, community agencies, our students, and employees to deliver opportunities to refine those competencies. One recent project that Memorial University has embraced is the concept of career integrated learning (CIL).

The establishment of a CIL office is a critical component for students to refine their competencies and participate in work integrated learning through work-term placements and other forms of experiential learning. The ability to establish learning outcomes with employers and students is critical to our students' marine education. Students gain an awareness of competency development and learn how they can embrace opportunities to refine not only their technical skills but also those competencies inherent in a marine education.

If we are to prepare graduates at all levels of their marine education – from one-day certificates through to PhDs – then we need to embrace a holistic approach. In the coming decade, Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) as denoted by UNESCO, we have an opportunity to reassess how we provide a marine education and ensure our students gain not only the technical skills required for participation in the workforce but those competencies required for them to fully realize their potential and future growth.

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