



2020 – The Year in Review

2020 was a challenging year in so many ways, so it is not surprising that many of us have been looking forward to the New Year and the fresh start that it represents. At Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences (PCU-WHS) a look back over 2020 reveals some significant milestones and highlights that were achieved despite the challenges of the pandemic, and which create the foundation for many more exciting developments as we enter 2021.

During 2020, students enrolled in a range of courses, from full-time students working toward completing the Bachelor of Disability Management (BDM) degree, while others enrolled in the Advanced Certificate in Return to Work, to those who enrolled in the many continuing education modules available. The University continued to support the advancement of improved Disability Management and Return to Work practices for employers in both the public and private sectors.

The high standard of curriculum and program delivery was officially recognized by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training who approved the University's application for the Education Quality Assurance (EQA) designation. PCU-WHS is proud to join the elite list of institutions carrying the EQA designation, all of whom have demonstrated that they meet criteria beyond what is required by legislation, regulatory bodies and accreditation processes.

In February 2020, applications opened for a second intake of the WorkSafeBC Scholarship program, giving prospective students the opportunity to receive \$6,000/year of tuition support for two years for the full time Bachelor of Disability Management degree program, which requires prospective students to enter the program with 60 recognized credits from another institution and the Scholarship applies to the final two years to complete the BDM program at PCU-WHS. This Scholarship program was created to help fill a gap in BC's workforce, increasing the availability of skilled workers in disability management with a consistently high standard of professional knowledge and practice.

The University has a long history of successfully delivering flexible, remote learning programs where students participate online from their own locations across Canada and internationally. With online classes led by instructors who are experts in the field and 24 hour course access, PCU-WHS students were able to continue their studies without disruption when the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a sudden requirement for physical distancing and remote work protocols. In addition to seamlessly maintaining the status-quo, the University was also able to quickly pivot in response to the new challenges being faced by Disability Management, Return to Work, Human Resource and Health & Safety teams as they navigated rapidly to changing public health orders.

The special purpose online Summer Series consisted of three related, yet stand-alone, modules that focused on key aspects of mental health challenges promoting worker resilience, and sustaining a healthy workforce, and two modules that focused on the workplace health systems to ensure being able to accommodate infectious diseases.

As host of the IFDM 2018 conference held in Vancouver and with IFDM 2020 in Brussels postponed due to COVID-19, PCU-WHS partnered with the Belgian Social Security Organization, hosts of IFDM 2020, to organize an interim global Special Webinar Event entitled, "Return to Work Strategies Under COVID-19: A Global Perspective" with speakers from Europe and Canada, and almost 1,000 registrants from all corners of the world connecting digitally to explore different responses to the international pandemic.



Despite the need to react and respond, PCU-WHS was also able to continue to build momentum with other organizations. In 2020, the University finalized agreements with multiple Human Resources associations across Canada. Early in the year, the Human Resources Professional Association recommitted their long-term e-learning partnership by renewing the pre-approval of CPD hours for a number of PCU-WHS modules for their members.

This was followed by similar new partnerships that were launched during the year with CPHR Alberta, CPHR Nova Scotia and CPHR New Brunswick. Very significantly, these developments also reflect the increasing importance of Human Resource professionals in the accommodation and on-boarding of individuals with mental and physical health challenges.

In addition to concluding the successful upskilling of almost 200 WSIB Return-to-Work Division staff through PCU-WHS CE modules, a group of Saskatchewan WCB employees as well as a group of staff from the Insurance Corporation of BC participated in a number of Zoom delivered CE modules. Discussions are currently underway to include a dedicated group of Alberta employers as well as Alberta WCB staff during 2021 in these continuing education efforts.

The impacts and benefits of these Continuing Education programs reach far beyond Canadian borders, with institutions in Belgium, Germany, the UK, Malaysia and Hong Kong continuing to license the Disability Management Practitioner Program to deliver to Disability Management professionals in their own countries, recognizing PCU-WHS as a global leader in course quality and design.

Following both an organizational and degree review by the Degree Quality Assessment Board of the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training early in 2020, PCU-WHS was most pleased to receive notification in September from the Honourable Melanie Mark, then BC Minister for Advanced Education, Skills and Training, that degree approval had been re-authorized to October 2025.

2020 wrapped up with an important milestone for the University as it hosted the inaugural Convocation ceremony for the Bachelor of Disability Management program. Shanna Ramm, a Senior Disability and Wellness Specialist based in Regina, Saskatchewan became the first ever graduate from the degree program, with another group of students on track to complete the BDM in 2021.

Looking to the year ahead, we know that the effects of the pandemic will continue to grow. People with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted with many support programs suspended, resources redirected, and public health and community partners stretched beyond capacity. The resulting impacts on this already-vulnerable population have already been dramatic. The Globe and Mail recently reported that the number of disabled Canadians contemplating suicide has increased from 14% to 28% during the pandemic.

According to the WHO World Report on Disability, 15% of the world's population, or more than 1 billion people, are living with disability. Of this number, it is estimated 450 million are living with a mental or neurological condition, and two-thirds of these people will not seek professional medical help, largely due to stigma, discrimination and neglect.

This year, the University is launching a new eight-module Certificate Program to address the mental health aspects of disability management and engage a holistic approach to foundational and current challenges related to evolving societal changes, the realities of a global pandemic and resultant workplace challenges. This new Certificate Program entitled, "Effective Workplace Responses to Mental Health" begins in March 2021.



If anyone is unable to commit to the full certificate program but they are seeking ongoing CE opportunities or searching for specialized training in key areas, it is possible to sign up for the individual modules that interest them.

As we look forward to the year ahead, we thank our dedicated faculty and staff, our community partners and, of course, our students for their continued hard work and commitment. With your support, the University reached some significant achievements in 2020 and together we will continue to work hard to improve outcomes for ill and injured workers and to raise the standard for workplace responses during these most uncertain times. Thank you!

About PCU-WHS

Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences (PCU-WHS) is a statutory, not-for-profit, post-secondary, degree granting education and research institution for the special purpose of creating and disseminating new knowledge including applied research in the fields of workplace safety, health promotion, return to work and disability management, comprehensive rehabilitation, and disability leadership studies.

In addition to the Bachelor of Disability Management, the University offers an Advanced Certificate in Return to Work as well as numerous continuing education certificate programs and courses for professionals who are already established in the field. The broad curriculum of courses range from 12 hours in duration for an individual continuing education module, up to four years in total for the full BDM degree program. All options are offered online attracting students from across Canada and all over the world.

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