WACE

Advancing cooperative and work-integrated education

Annual Report 2024-2025

Table of Contents

Contents

WACE Secretariat Strategic Operations 3
WACE Finance Report 4
WACE Programs & Partnerships 5
WACE Awards Committee 7
WACE International Research Committee 9
WACE Conference Planning Committee 10
WACE Membership Committee 11

WACE Secretariat Strategic Operations

2024/25 was another strong year for WACE. We continue to grow our network of networks, improve our financial situation and expand our offerings through our programs and partnerships. Included in this year's annual report are highlights from our committees: programs and partnerships, awards, membership, the International Research Committee and finance. These committee reports are terrific summaries of the great work being done by our volunteers and community members. Thank you for all of your hard work – we would not be the association we are today without your dedication.

We had a wonderful gathering in Istanbul in May at our World Conference hosted by Bahri Toper and his team at Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul. Prior to the conference was our second Leadership Institute which had participants from Africa, North America, Europe and Asia. We are planning to offer a Leadership Institute prior to each World Conference as leadership development continues to be something that our global WIL community is requesting.

Our global conversations have been a big hit. It is a wonderful way to stay connected, learn about each other and our WIL strategies.

Looking forward and building upon the development of our Global Quality WIL Framework, we have been awarded some funds from the Government of Canada to create a quality framework for international WIL experiences. We will be gathering data towards this new development and hope to be presenting a preliminary framework to our community in 2026.

Please enjoy the rest of this annual report, and from the entire Executive Committee for WACE thank you for your engagement with our association.

Dr. Norah McRae and Dr. Sampan Silapanad
Co-Chairs, WACE Executive Council

WACE Finance Report

WACE achieved another year of strong financial performance, driven primarily by sustained membership revenue and the success of the World Conference in Istanbul, Türkiye. These factors have reinforced the organization's financial foundation, enabling continued delivery of value to members while ensuring long-term fiscal stability. The successful completion of WACE's fourth Canadian audit marks a significant milestone, underscoring our commitment to transparency, accountability, and prudent financial management.

Looking forward, WACE's strengthened financial reserves position the organization to effectively navigate future challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities. We extend our appreciation to our auditors and to Redstone Agency for their continued efforts in supporting the integrity of WACE's financial operations. Their contributions have been instrumental in maintaining the organization's sound financial standing.

Joe Henhoeffer
Treasurer, WACE Executive Council

WACE Programs & Partnerships

The 2024/ 2025 period has seen an expansion in WACE's reach and engagement through programs and partnerships. The Global Strategy Council have met twice, once virtually and once face to face providing valuable updates on regional and national initiatives and providing the WACE Executive Committee with valuable input. Key discussion points at these meetings included feedback on the development of the International Quality Work -Integrated Learning Framework, a current WACE project and the WACE Strategic Plan. Another key project in this period was the refresh of the WACE brand and the complete redevelopment of the WACE Website which now provides a searchable resources library developed with contributions from our network of National Associations. This initiative provides valuable resources to enhance practitioner knowledge and progresses the Calls to Action in the WACE Global Charter.

The National Association network grows from strength to strength under Anne-Marie Fannon's leadership with 10 associations now members of WACE. The National Associations met regularly over the past year, focusing on knowledge sharing about association structures, operations, and government relations. The group continued to support each other's work by participating in joint webinars and conferences. Once again, the national associations group provided expertise to support the WACE conversations: WIL Around the World webinars, which showcases WIL in their respective countries and the series continues to be a great benefit for members.

Global Challenge is a student WACE program managed in partnership with Practera, an educational technology company. Diverse global student teams undertake online projects to help business, government and community organisations identify practical 'Shared Value' initiatives to create social, environmental, and economic value linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Over this reporting period WACE ran 3 Global Challenge programs and reached the milestone of 1,000 students having participated in the program from 76 Institutions since its inception in 2020. A consolidated report from the period 2020 – 2025 provided an overview of the impacts of the program from the post program client and student feedback of all programs. Student completion rate was 89%, 84% of students reported an increase in social and professional networks and 85% reported an increase in global and employability skills. The highest ranked skills where students report growth were leadership, cultural consciousness and innovation skills. Feedback from the 147 clients participating in the program report that 83 % were willing to recommend the program.

The WACE World Conference at Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul was an enormous success from every aspect with strong partnerships forged with sponsors, keynotes and participants from a wide range of countries. WACE is deeply grateful to the leadership of Bahçeşehir University and Bahri Toper and his team for the hosting this impactful conference for WACE. Planning is now in full swing for the International Research Symposium in New Zealand at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in April 2026 in collaboration with Work - Integrated Learning New Zealand (WILNZ). Proposals for upcoming events in 2027 and 2028 are under consideration and will be announced in due course.

Judie Kay
Vice Chair, Programs and Partnerships, Co-Chair of WACE Global Strategy Council, Chair, WACE Global Challenge Program

WACE Awards Committee

WACE has awards to acknowledge significant and outstanding contributions. The Leadership and Innovation, Outstanding Professional Contribution, and Employer/Partner contribution awards are presented at the WACE conference held every 2 years.

The Research award is presented at the International Research Symposium in the alternate year. Best Refereed Paper award and Best Poster (for graduate student or merging researcher) is presented at both the conference and International Research symposiums.

We had a good number of nominations this year, across all categories, and from a wide range of countries. The following awards were presented to the 2025 recipients at the WACE conference held in Turkey in May:

1. **WACE Leadership and Innovation Award** – In recognition of a significant and sustained contribution to executive leadership during which innovative strides were undertaken to produce transformational results.

   2025 Recipient: Francesca Walker-Martin, ASET and *University of Lancashire, United Kingdom*

2. **WACE Outstanding Professional Contribution award** – In recognition of outstanding and significant contributions to cooperative and work-integrated education (CWIE).

   2025 Recipient: Keiko Saito-Miyakawa, *International Language & Culture Centre Co., Ltd., Japan, NPO Japan Forum for Work Integrated Learning, Japan*

3. **WACE Employer/Partner contribution Award –** In recognition of outstanding and sustained contributions as an employer or partner organisation to the practice of CWIE.

   2025 Recipients: Recipient: Professor Chin Beek Yoke, *IMU University, Malaysia*

4. **WACE Best Paper Award** – best refereed conference proceedings paper (presented at a WACE conference or a WACE International Research Symposium).

   2025 Recipient: **Dave Fenton,** University of Toronto Scarborough
   Paper: "Re-imagining Human Capital Theory and student professional identity development in work-integrated learning with a conceptual framework."

Congratulations to the award recipients for 2025. The committee would like to thank all those involved with the selection panels for the awards.

The nominations for the WACE Research award to be presented at the WACE IRS 2026 will open in November 2025.

Associate Professor Jenny Fleming, Awards Committee Chair

WACE International Research Committee

The International Research Committee (IRC) facilitated the reviewing of the abstracts and the refereed conference proceedings for the WACE Global Conference held in at Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul, Turkey. The call of abstracts resulted in 127 abstract submissions from 21 countries, proposing to present either a presentation, workshop, round table, or a poster. Of these submissions, 110 were accepted. The rejected abstracts were mostly that the proposed content was outside the scope of WIL, which has been the common reason for rejection for the last few years. There were also some submissions withdrawn due to presenters not being able to secure travel visas in time.

For the global conference, refereed proceedings is not a requirement (unlike for the WACE IRS), therefore, the refereed proceedings were not as large as that of last year (which was the largest to date). Nevertheless, there were 17 refereed conference proceedings published within a 108 page proceedings document. The best paper award was for the paper entitled "*Re-imagining human capital theory and student professional identity development in work-integrated learning through a conceptual framework*" by David Fenton from University of Toronto and University of Cambridge. The proceedings are downloadable here.

The awardees of the 2023 WACE Research Grant, Deana Grant-Smith, Craig Cameron, Laura de Zwaan, and Anne Hewit, produced a comprehensive research report on "*Providing equitable access to international opportunities: The possibilities for expanding global access through virtual international work-integrated learning*". This report provides deep insight on virtual WIL within an international context and provides principles for good practice. The report can be downloaded here.

The WACE Research Grant was made available again this year, with the wining project being entitled "*Enabling inclusive, accessible and equitable work-integrated learning programs for neurodivergent students*" by Kathryn Hay (Massey University, New Zealand) and Antione Pennaforte (Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, France).

The IRC held a preconference meeting at the 2025 Global Conference in Turkey where research trends and needs were discussed with each of the respective countries. The 2026 global WACE gathering will be the International Research Symposium, which will be held in Auckland, New Zealand.

The IRC wants to thank everyone involved with the reviewing of abstracts and proceedings papers and particularly would like to acknowledge Associate Professor Jenny Fleming who carried much of the workload associated with the review process.

Dr. Karsten Zegwaard

Chair, International Research Committee, WACE Executive Council

WACE Conference Planning Committee

Preparations for the WACE 2025 Istanbul Conference began in March 2024, marking an important milestone for Bahçeşehir University as the host institution. Over the course of the year, the organizing committee conducted nearly ten online coordination meetings with WACE representatives and more than fifty internal meetings focused on operations, sponsorships, accommodation, travel, and communication planning. These efforts ensured the seamless execution of the conference, which was held from May 28 to May 30, 2025, at Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul.

One of the key achievements during the preparation phase was the extensive outreach to industry partners. The conference announcement was shared with approximately 600 companies through direct emailing, resulting in formal invitations to 150 organizations. Ultimately, around 70 external participants from various companies and partner institutions attended the event, along with 70 internal participants from Bahçeşehir University, including faculty and administrative staff. This balance of participation demonstrated the university's strong commitment to fostering collaboration between academia and industry.

The conference served as a major platform to highlight Bahçeşehir University's unique implementation of the Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and CO-OP models. As the only university in Turkey officially affiliated with WACE and applying the CO-OP model through its Career Center, Bahçeşehir University attracted significant attention from both domestic and international institutions. Following the event, several universities from Turkey, the Middle East, Canada, and England expressed interest in learning more about the university's distinctive "Branded Courses" model, which integrates company engagement directly into the academic curriculum.

The outcomes of the conference extended well beyond attendance figures. Participant feedback collected through post-conference emails indicated high satisfaction with the event's content, organization, and overall impact. Many attendees emphasized that the conference offered valuable insights into innovative WIL practices and inspired potential collaborations.

The whole planning and preparation process was carried out with active participation and in close collaboration with WACE senior management/conference committee and supporting association management team, Redstone Agency.

In summary, the 2024–2025 period was marked by significant achievements for Bahçeşehir University and the WACE organizing committee. The successful planning and execution of the WACE 2025 Istanbul Conference strengthened the university's leadership role in Work-Integrated Learning, expanded its global network, and fostered meaningful academic–industry partnerships that will continue to shape future initiatives.

Bahri Toper - Bahçeşehir University CO-OP Director
Neyzen Aydın Yanık - Bahçeşehir University CO-OP Career Counselor

WACE Membership Committee

The membership committee met consistently throughout the year, focusing on recruiting new members and enhancing the value of WACE membership for existing members. Recruitment efforts included identifying high-potential prospects from lists of previous conference attendees and former WACE members who had disengaged from the organization. The committee also supported the development of a promotional video featuring current members sharing what they value about their WACE membership.

To further enrich the member experience, we promoted existing events—such as conferences and professional development opportunities—and introduced new engagement channels, including WACE Conversations: WIL Around the World.

Looking ahead to 2025/2026, the committee plans to update its terms of reference and maintain a strong focus on recruitment and member engagement.

Brigitte Ilg, Director of International Office – DHBW Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University Heidenheim campus

Anne Fannon, Director of the Work-Learn Institute, University of Waterloo, Canada