

Put evolving H&S education to work for you

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The January 2016 launch of a graduate certificate program at Fleming College's Lindsay, ON campus is just the latest indicator of an evolution in occupational health and safety education. Roughly 50 Canadian educational institutions, including 16 in Ontario alone, offer some sort of post-secondary course, certificate or degree program in occupational health and safety.

Larry Masotti, WSPS' director, marketing & business development, sees the "credentializing and professionalizing" of health and safety as a growing business advantage. "Hazard identification, assessment and compliance continue to be the foundation of an effective health and safety program," says Masotti.

"What's changing is that health and safety today encompasses many more hazards and issues, all of which affect organizational performance: psychosocial hazards, workplace accessibility, corporate social responsibility... Managing these responsibilities requires diverse skill sets, which help health and safety practitioners navigate the corporate environment and assume informal or formal leadership roles," explains Masotti.

This is precisely the goal of post-secondary health and safety programs like Fleming College's graduate certificate program in health, safety and environmental compliance.

"Our new program will provide industry and the government with employees trained in all aspects of compliance across a range of sectors such as environmental, industrial, municipal, and provincial enforcement," says Linda Skilton, dean of the School of Environmental and Natural Resource Sciences. "The program emphasizes inspection and investigation relating to occupational health and safety legislation and environmental law. This includes court procedures and audits as well as providing training and communication skills to manage a wide variety of challenging situations.

"Industry representatives we consulted clearly articulated that this skill set would be a definite hiring asset for future employees in their health and safety areas. New employees will require less training and will be able to step into their roles quickly."

Integrating health and safety into other disciplines

Tony Pasteris, chairman and president of Minerva Canada, has made it his mission to integrate health and safety into employees' thinking and core values even before they launch their careers.

Minerva Canada Safety Management Education Inc. is a not for profit corporation that promotes health and safety education in post-secondary teaching institutions, with a focus on engineering and business faculties. "At least 40 universities and colleges, 900 professors and 1050 engineering and business students have been involved in Minerva health and safety educational programs and activities," says Pasteris, "but providing this education is still a journey. More needs to be done."

Pasteris' personal commitment arises from his own experiences. "My work life really brought out for me the importance of health and safety, but I did not get that education when I studied engineering. I acquired it through Imperial Oil."

Pasteris worked for the company for 37 years in 22 different positions. "When we had graduates from engineering and business schools come into the business, I was shocked at how little they knew about health and safety."

To help post-secondary institutions remedy this, Minerva has worked with partners to develop 28 case studies and 22 teaching modules for use in the classroom. The organization also offers health and safety learning forums for engineering and business professors, and two annual national awards for engineering and business students.

These initiatives benefit students and their eventual employers. “Students become better individuals and more desirable employees,” says Pasteris. “They better understand the importance of health and safety, and develop skills that they can transfer to other parts of the business.” It’s a timely development. As organizations become increasingly lean and baby boomers retire, there are fewer mentoring opportunities for new employees. Nevertheless, they’re expected to hit the ground running.

Minerva’s work resonates with many organizations committed to promoting health and safety leadership. Key supporters include General Motors, Imperial Oil and Ontario’s Ministry of Labour, and WSPS (a footnote below lists all key sponsors). WSPS’s Larry Masotti contributes personally as secretary-treasurer on Minerva’s Board of Directors. “What Minerva is doing lines up with my own belief that the best way to build cultures of safety is to inspire the leaders of tomorrow.”

Put the evolution in health and safety education to work for you

Tap into online information and research — often available at no cost — from members of Ontario’s prevention system, such as WSPS <http://www.wspss.ca> and the Ministry of Labour <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/>.

Additional opportunities appear below.

1. Check out this list of [post-secondary health and safety courses](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/information/courses.html) <http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/information/courses.html>, compiled by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)
2. Participate in WSPS outreach opportunities, including
 - local [Networking and Knowledge Exchange](http://www.wspss.ca/Get-Involved/Networking-and-Knowledge-Exchange) functions <http://www.wspss.ca/Get-Involved/Networking-and-Knowledge-Exchange>
 - [volunteer opportunities](http://www.wspss.ca/Get-Involved/Volunteering) <http://www.wspss.ca/Get-Involved/Volunteering> in your community
 - the [Safety Group program](http://www.wspss.ca/WSPS-Safety-Group/Safety-Group-Overview.aspx) <http://www.wspss.ca/WSPS-Safety-Group/Safety-Group-Overview.aspx>, a WSIB performance-based premium rebate program in which businesses work collectively to reduce injury frequency and severity, and earn WSIB rebates
3. Explore WSPS’ [Small Business Centre](http://www.wspss.ca/Small-Business-Centre/Small-Business-Safety-Made-Easy.aspx) <http://www.wspss.ca/Small-Business-Centre/Small-Business-Safety-Made-Easy.aspx>.
4. Make use of [Minerva case studies and teaching modules](http://safetymanagementeducation.com/teaching-resources/) <http://safetymanagementeducation.com/teaching-resources/>.
5. Sponsor Minerva and/or offer your workplace as the subject of a case study teaching module <http://safetymanagementeducation.com/why-become/>.

** Key sponsors of Minerva include the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Workplace Safety and Prevention Services, Imperial Oil Limited, General Motors of Canada, DuPont Canada, Nova Chemicals, Bruce Power, Shell Canada, CF Industries, BASF, Chemtrade Logistics, Dow Chemicals, Erco Worldwide, Nexen, H.L. Blachford, Canada Post, Trimac, the Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals, the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, Mitacs, Engineers Canada, Mirarco, and the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering.*