WPC SURVEY OUTCOMES: WE ASKED YOU... HOW TO BOOST OIL & GAS INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA COOPERATION?

There are many successful examples of synergic cooperation between industry and academia globally, that vary considerably among universities, businesses and countries. Collaborative partnerships with academic institutions contribute to the competitiveness of the Oil & Gas industry through developing qualified graduates profiles and technological innovation in the continuously changing energy landscape.

Continuing the good WPC practice, the WPC Young Professionals Committee have conducted the Survey “From University Campus to Workplace: Boosting Oil & Gas Industry - Academia Cooperation”. It aims to get a sense of students who aspire to have a career in the Oil & Gas industry and question Young Professionals as industry insiders. The Survey also focuses on understanding the respondents’ perception of the Oil & Gas industry and academia partnerships. This Survey addresses the general awareness of programmes and support mechanisms and the track-record of participation in joint programmes. It also investigates the views on the needs and willingness to contribute to industry-academia initiatives.

As part of our commitment, this report based on the Survey findings intends to serve as a tool for decision-makers in the WPC network to foster industry-academia collaboration and give a fresh boost for innovative initiatives that will prepare a talent pool for the Oil & Gas industry of the future.

With the support of Survey Ambassadors in the WPC global network, the online survey reached nearly a thousand respondents, representing 74 countries across six continents. Engineers, half of which are
petroleum engineers, dominate in the respondents’ profile. The majority of respondents are young professionals employed in the Oil & Gas industry, while the remaining 30% are students and recent graduates or those who are unemployed and looking for employment in the industry. A significant proportion of respondents (38%) are female, which is encouraging, as the WPC Gender Study “Untapped Reserves” shows currently only 22% female employees in the Oil & Gas industry.

Internationalisation and mobility in higher education are highlighted in the fact that more than a quarter of respondents have completed either their university graduate or postgraduate studies abroad or have combined home-based and international education. Currently, 16% of respondents are based outside their home countries, most of which in France and Norway. More than half of the respondents are affiliated to (inter)national professional associations.

The Survey looked into the overall awareness of cooperation of the Oil & Gas industry and their place of study. The top five models of cooperation that respondents are aware of in their place of study include internship programmes, guest industry lectures, conferences, scholarships and joint R&D projects.

A majority of student respondents and those currently employed confirm they have participated in and benefited from a form of cooperation with the Oil & Gas industry and their university (see Chart 1). It is important to highlight that 60% of employed respondents state that this engagement was decisive for their subsequent employment in the Oil & Gas industry.

The 34% of current students and 45% of employed respondents that have not benefited from industry presence at their home universities, require special attention. According to respondents, corporate programmes have not reached them due to general lack of awareness or the lack of given opportunity. Social networks, university channels and professional associations are the top communication channels where students learn about corporate presence.

Membership in professional associations increases participation in industry-academia initiatives – 76% of those that have participated in these initiatives are members of professional associations, reaffirming their potential.
Internship programmes lead among the desired list of corporate initiatives - the majority of respondents highlight internships as the most rewarding opportunity they can gain during studies (See Chart 2).

To better understand the concerns and expectations on this topic, the Survey investigated views on students’ confidence on finding a job placement in the Oil & Gas industry. While they express general confidence in chances for employment, they simultaneously anticipate the lack of job opportunities and lack of necessary skill-sets as major concerns. More than a half of the student respondents (59%) highlight that work experience during studies will have a major influence on their future employment.

The majority of young professionals (64%) admit they did not have realistic expectations of employment, and encountered hurdles when entering the labour market. Almost half of them point out that internships and volunteering during their studies were key for a career in the Oil & Gas industry.

Respondents demonstrated a high willingness to get involved and contribute to industry-academia programmes. The need to acquire job-related skills, an increased chance for future employment and the willingness to deepen an understanding of the industry are the top three drivers for students to take part in initiatives with Oil & Gas companies. The top three motives young professionals employed...
in the Oil & Gas industry have for
ties with the academic sector are
expansion of professional networks
through cross-sectorial networking,
acquisition of additional
knowledge applicable to their
workplace and finding solutions
to job-encountered problems.

The survey looked into views
on the university curriculum and
its alignment with technology
developments and the changing
Oil & Gas landscape. Compared
to 70% of students aspiring
for a career in the Oil & Gas
industry that are confident
that the curriculum they are
attending follows industry
trends and developments, only
a third of employed young
professionals share this view on
the curriculum they attended.

Investing in R&D to innovate
and create new technologies is
vital in enabling the industry to
meet global energy demand and
ensure competitiveness. Around
half of respondents confirm they
have had the opportunity to take
part in R&D projects within the
industry. The top needs recognised
in relation to enhanced R&D
cooperation are combining the
skills of industrial practice with
academic knowledge, increased
understanding between industry
practitioners and university
research, more support to early
stage research and more internship
opportunities related to R&D.

A question that deserves
special attention in view of
talent attraction and retention
in the industry is “Given the
chance to start over, would you
choose to do the same academic
studies” – a vast majority of
student respondents (73%)
and those employed (67%)
would choose to pursue the
same educational path again.

The survey shows that
young professionals employed
in the Oil & Gas industry
demonstrate a high interest in
life-long learning programmes
in cooperation with universities
- 95% of employed respondents
would be willing to benefit
from university-tailored further
education courses. However,
a significant portion – 38% of
respondents – have not had this
opportunity after completing
their studies (see Chart 3).

In view of notable mobility
and internationalisation of
education, a significant number of
respondents highlighted the need
for industry to take into account
international students when
tailoring corporate programmes.

The overall general
sentiment of respondents
shows that students are more
optimistic in relation to young
professionals when asked
about the quality of cooperation
between their university and
the Oil & Gas industry.

When asked about the
most important stakeholders
and contributors to economic
development, respondents
believe that the industry has
the leading role in economic
development in society, indicating
trust and reliance on the industry
for academic empowerment
and on their future at large.

We look forward to
further discussing the Survey
insights during the 6th WPC
Future Leaders Forum in
Saint Petersburg! ✨