

A THREE-WAY PARTNERSHIP

Cooperative Education is an optional structured program at The University of Dayton that integrates classroom theory with practical work experience.

Participating students alternate periods of full-time study at the University with periods of full-time paid work experience in industry, business or government.

The Engineering Co-op program requires that the students' employment be related to the academic engineering discipline being pursued. It should be diversified enough to afford a broad learning experience. Subsequent work periods should increase in difficulty and responsibility.

Employer's evaluations of student job performance and student feedback are integral parts of the program.

Co-op builds a strong and positive relationship between the academic institution and the surrounding business and industrial community.

WHY EMPLOYERS PARTICIPATE

Employers in business, industry and government willingly participate in Cooperative Education because they have found students to be valuable employees. It is also an integral part of their professional recruiting program. Cooperative Education graduates represent a good future source of well-trained supervisory and executive manpower. The training period provides an opportunity for the employer to evaluate the student as a prospective permanent employee.

Employing organizations consider participation in Cooperative Education a long-range investment in their future. As partners with the University, they are engaged in a joint effort to more fully develop young talent, thus assuring a better education for the student, improved utilization of the graduate and greater visibility and cooperation with colleges and universities.

Cooperative Education can prove valuable to an employer when there is a need to:

- Secure a stable source of intelligent, paraprofessional talent.
- Derive greater value from the work of permanent professional employees by permitting them to focus on more demanding tasks.
- Obtain competent technical assistance.
- Enhance relationships with colleges and universities and promote employment opportunities.
- Reduce costs of orientation and training, as well as early attrition and turnover of new college hires.

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Students alternate approximately 16-week semesters of full-time study with full-time work. Most students are available for their initial work assignments after they have completed the first semester of their sophomore year or three complete academic semesters.

Student applicants from Engineering and Engineering Technology must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.3 for admission to the Engineering Co-op program.

Students are expected to remain with their employer throughout the entire work semester and to return to the same employer for each scheduled work semester through graduation. Changes of employer will be considered upon request.

Work semesters normally coincide with the regular campus calendar; that is, students usually begin a work assignment on Monday of the week classes begin and continue through the last Friday of the term. Summer work assignments normally begin mid-May and continue through mid-August. Starting and ending dates are published and may be changed if mutually agreeable to both employer and students.

The employer will be given formal guidelines and documents to complete at the end of each work term with the student.

Students are required to submit a written report of their work experience upon completion of each work semester.

Students are subject to all rules, regulations and policies of their employer, just as any other employee.

Students are given the opportunity to interview with potential employers as follows:

On-Campus Interviews – These are open interviews offered in October and February, whereby each student has the opportunity to interview with several different employers. Employers may also schedule interviews on campus if needed by contacting the UD engineering co-op staff.

Negotiated Interviews – These are interviews held on the employer's premises rather than on campus.

STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN CO-OP TO:

- Gain practical training in a chosen academic discipline
- Define career goals and evaluate career choices
- Have classwork come “alive” because of on-the-job exposure
- Experience and develop teamwork required in the work place
- Earn money for educational expenses
- Gain maturity, develop self-confidence and learn money management
- Enhance effective communication skills
- Evaluate an employer over a period of time
- Become oriented to the work environment, facilitating the transition to full-time employment upon graduation
- Obtain an experience enhancing knowledge of world, national and local affairs
- Gain a broad exposure to a major field through contact with professionals, technology, techniques and knowledge which may be more contemporary than the classroom
- Acquire work experience that develops understanding and appreciation of the problems and diversities of society
- Increase understanding of a diverse work environment

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Coordinator of Cooperative Education, historically a representative from Human Resources or Engineering, is the central contact for the student within the company.

Coordinators should conduct an orientation to the organization for students. Some suggested topics are covered below:

- All safety policies and procedures required
- Introduce the student to all members of his/her group, with emphasis on “key players”.
- Explain reporting responsibilities (the chain of command) within the group.

UD Engineering Co-op Employer Handbook

- Explain office policies on work hours, lunch and break periods, and, if appropriate and not previously covered when the students are hired, the salary and benefits for the position and any overtime that might apply.
- Discuss the standard for dress, grooming, and overall appearance within the group.
- Invite the student to all department staff meetings and other activities.

Make the student feel welcome in the group and assure him/her that you and your entire staff will do your utmost to make this experience as productive and mutually beneficial as possible. Encourage the student to utilize your “open door” and to bring in any questions, problems, or concerns that he/she may encounter.

Discuss, at least in general terms, the work that you plan to have the student perform and, if someone other than yourself, the person who will assign and review the work and supervise the student.

Tell the student about the organizational policies regarding proprietary information and/or government classified information and security clearance that may be required. If proprietary/security information is involved in the work of your group, advise the student that he/she must submit any reports, logs, or journals, required by the college, to you for approval before submission to the students’ co-op education/internship coordinator or faculty advisor.

If the student is new to your geographical area, you should offer information and advice on housing possibilities, public transportation, special events, and cultural and social opportunities.

The student’s immediate supervisor plays an extremely important role in the development of the student and assignment.

The supervisor’s influence is particularly needed in supporting the student, through encouragement and stimulation, to grow in knowledge, personal and business maturity.

To make the student feel comfortable in the work environment, the supervisor needs to help the student integrate into the work group.

The supervisor should discuss with the student the assignment and performance expectations on the student’s first day of work.

After the co-op has settled into the assignment, the supervisor should review the student’s progress to ensure the assignment has remained challenging and worthwhile. Periodically, the supervisor and co-op should discuss the student’s progress, plans for the remainder of the assignment and any problems encountered.

If an assignment is significantly changed due to unforeseen problems, making the job unsuitable for a co-op student, the supervisor should immediately inform the Co-op Coordinator.

STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS

Students' expectations will grow as more experience and education is gained. As they mature and develop self-confidence and judgment, they should be given more responsibility and challenged with more difficult problems. As the student is given more responsibility, the student expects more authority in relation to gained skills and ability. The student wants to be able to experience the use of untested abilities and know the feeling of having done a job well.

The co-op should expect to have early tasks that may seem to be rather unglamorous due to the student's lack of education and experience. It is important, however, for the supervisor to explain to the student the importance of those tasks (i.e. the task is essential to gaining an understanding of plant layout, the organization of the company, a method of operation).

During the last work period, it may be more beneficial for the student to work on one project for the full work period. In some cases, a project may be carried over from one work period to another.

CONCLUSION OF EACH WORK TERM

THE COORDINATOR SHOULD REVIEW THE FOLLOWING WITH THE STUDENT AT THE CONCLUSION OF EACH WORK TERM:

- Exit interview reviewing the student's performance during the work term. A copy of the form can be found at: http://www.udayton.edu/engineering/cooperative-education/employer_information.php
- Assignment for the next period:
Develop a preliminary plan based upon anticipated work, the student's skills and needs.
Project a developmental plan for the next work period.

Students on last work term:

- Discuss career goals and employment possibilities.