Enriching Undergraduate Learning through Co-operative Education

Arnie Dyck, Associate Dean, Co-operative Studies, Faculty of Mathematics
Co-op: Three-way Partnership

Employers

Students

Institution
Role of Partners

**Institutions**
- Ensure sufficient and appropriate “learning” opportunities available
- Monitor student progress

**Employers**
- Pay commensurate salaries
- Supervise, mentor and evaluate students

**Students**
- Engage in process to obtain productive, paid work
What distinguishes co-op?

Alternating sequence

Chance to go through the cycle of learning and applying many times
What distinguishes co-op?

Transferable experiences

- S \leftrightarrow W
- W \leftrightarrow S
What distinguishes co-op?

Normal number of **study** terms
16-24 months of paid **work** experience
Graduate in $4\frac{2}{3}$ years
What distinguishes co-op?

Multiple opportunities with different employers, industries, sectors

Increasing level of expertise

Varying degree of job responsibility
### How does co-op work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of Term</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>Return to campus interviews; work report submissions; finalize students returning/ employment opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 - 4</td>
<td>Job postings for main match</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 - 7</td>
<td>Employer interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Match occurs; students &amp; employers consolidate options</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 - 14</td>
<td>Second round: twice weekly posting/interview/ranking</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 - 17</td>
<td>Unemployed students distributes among field coordinators Field coordinators explore one-on-one matches</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st month of work</td>
<td>Employment matches continue on individual basis</td>
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Students: Challenges

- Learning how to play the co-op game
- Balancing academic and co-op work load
- Securing employment in early years
- Higher tuition fees
- Transitioning every 4 months
Employer: Experiences

+ Accessing bright, young student minds with new ideas, fresh perspectives/enthusiasm
+ Mentoring future employees/colleagues
+ Reducing future recruiting costs and risks
+ Creating bridges with academic institutions

- Recruiting/administrative costs
- Attracting senior students
Institution: Improved Quality

+ Well-motivated, superior applicants
+ Enhanced visibility/reputation
+ Enriched campus community
+ Improved curriculum/relevance
+ Well-qualified prepared graduates
+ Improved real-world connections
Institution: Challenges

- Balancing patterns of supply and demand
- Securing sufficient/relevant employment
- Optimizing employer/student matches
- Increased teaching costs
“I was part of the iPhone display team. I wasn't there to observe. I had real responsibilities and was an integral part of the team—and I got a job offer for when I graduate!”

Taif, 4th year CS
“Co-op gave me the opportunity to develop a strategy for creating new challenges for each new work term. I progressed from quality control to fixing bugs to programming. Next term I’m excited about moving up to a job as a program manager.”

Jason, 3rd year
“Co-op is one of the reasons I came to Waterloo. Back home you don’t work until you’ve finished school, and then you take an entry-level job because no one has work experience. I hope my work terms will give me an edge, and I will stand out from the others because I’ve had jobs.”

Hayden, International Student
"I tell the students to look at co-op as a four-month job interview. For the employer it’s a chance to try before you buy."

Peggy Jarvie, Director, Co-operative Education & Career Services
“The co-op students aren't green. They know the professional jargon and they know what they're doing.”

John, Employer Recruiter
Resources


USA: Co-operative Education Association (CEIA) [http://www.ceiainc.org/home.asp](http://www.ceiainc.org/home.asp)

Canada: Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE) [http://www.cafce.ca/](http://www.cafce.ca/)
Resources


Northeastern University: [http://www.northeastern.edu/experiential-learning/coop/](http://www.northeastern.edu/experiential-learning/coop/)

University of Waterloo [http://www.cecs.uwaterloo.ca/](http://www.cecs.uwaterloo.ca/)
Questions?

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