Building a Successful Co-Op Program

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Processes

The Columbus State University Cooperative Education (Co-Op) Program seeks to partner with area companies and agencies to enhance the education of CSU students by providing relevant field experience prior to graduation. Qualified Co-Ops should provide students with learning experiences that are complementary to the academic foundation presented in the classroom while extending beyond the boundaries of the typical scholastic environment.

The CSU Center for Career Development (CCD) is responsible for generating Co-Op opportunities by contacting employers and responding to employer inquiries regarding the CSU Co-Op Program. These opportunities will be posted on the CougarLink website for students to review and will be forwarded to relevant CSU colleges/departments for student referrals. The CCD serves as facilitator of the program.

Students will be responsible for reviewing the opportunities, securing faculty permission based on eligibility within his/her course of study, and submitting resume (and other necessary documents) to the CCD for review. The resume and related documents will be critiqued and approved before being forwarded to the employer for consideration. If interested, the employer will contact the student directly to arrange an interview. Once a selection has been made and the student has accepted, the CCD will be notified by the employer and the student will be academically registered for the Co-Op Program.

Below are the basic steps to follow to insure a successful Co-Op experience:

1. An inquiring company/supervisor will receive a packet of information from the CCD. This packet will include, but is not limited to:
   a. Supervisor Guidelines
   b. Co-Op Position Description Form
   c. Salary Guidelines
   d. Employer Evaluation Form
   e. Cooperative Education Agreement Form

2. Upon receiving the completed Co-Op Position Description Form, the CSU Co-Op Program Coordinator is responsible for posting the announcement, and forwarding a copy to relevant Colleges and/or departments for on-site posting.

3. Interested students will be responsible for reviewing the opportunities, securing necessary forms from the CCD and meeting with the Co-Op Program Coordinator.

4. The Co-Op Program Coordinator will serve as the Sponsoring Faculty Member. After evaluating the student’s eligibility, the Co-Op Program Coordinator will meet with the student to prepare for pending interview(s) as well as, provide the student with a Co-Op Student Handbook for review. This handbook includes, but is not limited to:
   • Student Information and Guidelines
   • Co-Op Education Student Agreement
   • Academic Department Evaluation
   • Co-Op Interview Form
   • Student Evaluation Form
   • Sample Resume

5. After all qualifications are verified, all parties (Student, Co-Op Program Coordinator, and Employer) may meet, if necessary, to discuss the specifications of the Co-Op and to agree on at least three learning objectives of the placement.

6. During the semester, the Co-Op Program Coordinator will be responsible for the following:
   • Registration of Student in Co-Op Course
   • Site Visit (and completion of the Site Visit Form)
   • Collection of Student and Employer Evaluations
   • Submitting of grade for course registration (Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory)
Columbus State University Co-Op program  
Supervisor’s Guidelines

Mission Statement of the Cooperative Education Program
The Columbus State University Internship Program seeks to provide CSU students with a well-balanced combination of academic study and periods of professional work experience in a setting related to the student’s major and/or career goals. Cooperative Education (Co-Op) is not only a way for a student to earn money to pay for college; it also provides practical, on-the-job experience. This allows the integration of classroom theory with professional work experience in business, industry, or government.

Relationship of Work to the Student’s Career
Co-Op assignments should relate as much as possible to the student's curriculum and career goals. Routine assignments such as filing are part of the learning experience but should not be the bulk of the student's responsibilities. Clerical/secretarial, counter sales, and similar experiences are unacceptable. Assignments should be varied to keep the student interested in the assignment. Responsibilities should be challenging, stimulating, and provide the student the opportunity to make a contribution to the company.

Responsibility
The student Co-Op is highly motivated to meet the demands of the employer in the development of the tasks assigned. We appreciate your setting a work schedule to fit the student's course schedule, but do not be too lenient. Establish the work requirements and the hours to be worked at the beginning. Insist that students follow all the rules established for regular employees.

Communication
During the work assignment, the student Co-Op most frequently interacts with the immediate supervisor. As a result, the supervisor is in a position to strongly influence the student's perception of the business world. The supervisor may help the student by addressing observable strengths and weaknesses. The supervisor's ability to provide encouragement and offer immediate, constructive feedback is integral to the student's success. Sometimes the student is supervised by one individual while being mentored by another. If this is the case in your organization, the mentor is also encouraged to address the student's observable strengths and weaknesses as well as offer constructive criticism.

Building Professional Attitudes
Since the student is in a stage of life where professional attitudes are being formulated, please maintain contact with the student in order to review performance, improve work habits, character, ethics and judgment. Good grades should be stressed and the need for harder study emphasized.

Education Through Experiential Opportunities
The Columbus State University Co-Op Program is growing and students value it highly. Please consider expanding your participation by using more than one student. We also hope our students are strongly considered for career positions when they graduate. When administered properly, a Co-Op work experience provides a superior method of education for the student. But, in order to be effective, the University and employers must correctly place students, the employer must offer meaningful work assignments which are consistent with career goals, and students must endeavor to derive everything they can from their academic work and seek to develop themselves in a responsible manner as an employee. When these conditions are fulfilled, an incomparable learning situation is created.
Supervisor’s Responsibilities

Co-Op Plan of Activities
The employer is encouraged to create a plan of activities for the semester in one- to two-week increments. Creating a plan should benefit the employer, the student, and representatives of the University. First, the company will have a well-developed idea of what it hopes to gain from the student’s employment. Pre-planning the semester also helps insure that the student receives a well-rounded, balanced exposure to opportunities in your company and industry, and the student will have a clearer understanding of the learning objectives. Finally, the plan will help the Faculty/Coordinator in evaluating the educational value of the proposed experience.

Orientation to the Organization
In acquainting the student with the company, the supervisor should:
- Provide the student with an overview of the organization’s purpose, philosophy and structure
- Provide the student with a copy of the Plan of Activities
- Describe the student’s position -- daily job functions and expectations
- Discuss administrative details with the student -- hours, record keeping, time sheets, overtime, sick and personal leave, holidays and lunch hours
- Orient the student to the office or department -- conduct a tour, make introductions, discuss office procedures, and office resources
- Answer questions on parking, dress code, and other matters

The Co-Op Project
In addition to the daily work responsibilities, the student and supervisor will be challenged to establish a specific tie-in to the academic program. With the aid of the college representatives, the student and supervisor should identify a particular problem or process connected to the job responsibility to study for improvement.

Site Visit
The Co-Op Program Coordinator may schedule a site visit with the supervisor and the student sometime during the semester. This is a great opportunity to showcase the student’s responsibilities, learning outcomes, special projects, etc. that have been achieved during the semester.

Supervisor’s Evaluation
As the immediate supervisor, you will be asked to evaluate the student in several categories. The specific evaluation form will be mailed to you approximately one month prior to the end of the semester. Please take the time to discuss your evaluation with the student before the work period is complete.

Program Requirements for Students
Any degree seeking undergraduate or graduate with a minimum GPA of 2.5 and at least two semesters (30 hours) of degree work is eligible to participate. All student Co-Ops must commit to a minimum of two semesters at a Co-Op placement. For continuing eligibility, the student must be in good academic standing. There is no limit to the number of semesters that a student may participate in Co-Op placements, as long as they are currently enrolled at CSU as a full-time student and meet the above guidelines.

Thank you for your interest and participation!
Co-Op Position Description Form

Organization Name _________________________________ ____________________________________

Business Description ______________________________________________________________________

Contact Person ___________________________________   Title ______________________________
Phone ____________________   Fax ____________________   E-mail _____________________________

Address ____________________________________________ ________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
Street                         City                                                                     State                      Zip

Internship Data

Title ________________________________________________ ________________________________________

Location of work ____________________________________ ________________________________________

Key Competencies __________________________________ ________________________________________

Special Requirements __________________________________ ________________________________________
(language, computer skills, etc.)

Brief Description __________________________________ ____________________________________________
(please attach additional information.)

Compensation (See Salary Guidelines) ________________________________ _______________________

Application Procedure

Which application materials would you like the student to provide?
_____ Special Application (please send us a supply of your applications)
_____ Personal Resume
_____ Transcript (unofficial)
_____ Letter of Interest
_____ Letter(s) of Recommendation (How many? ______)

Where would you like to interview candidates?
_____ Initial interviews will be on campus.   _____ Initial interviews will be off campus at office.
Please provide as much detail as possible about the work of the Co-Op in order that students and faculty may evaluate appropriateness for academic course credit.

Describe the work or the project:

What is the expected outcome for the company?

What will this Co-Op contribute to the company?
Salary Guidelines

Salaries paid to Co-Op students are determined by the employer in a number of ways. The factors most frequently used to set the salary of a particular Co-Op are the amount of work experience and academic classification. Of these two, it is most appropriate to relate the student’s salary to the amount of work experience the Co-Op has completed with the employer, rather than from the academic classification as the academic schools at CSU are not always consistent in the methods they use to determine the student’s classification. In the Co-Op program, we require that students maintain satisfactory progress towards the degree. Thus, academic progress is typically related to the number of work sessions the student has completed. In order to overcome some of the inequities students have experienced in salary administration, we recommend that the salary be related to that currently being offered to graduating seniors in the same discipline. Specifically, we recommend that the salary to be paid to a Co-Op during a particular work session be a percent of the salary the employer is offering to a graduating professional.

A recommended range of percentages for each work period is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Period</th>
<th>% Graduate Salary Offers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>58-62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>62-70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>70-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>75-80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>80-85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first Co-Op work period is primarily an orientation period and the student is less productive than subsequent work periods. Thus, the incremental increase between periods one and two is less than between subsequent periods when the student contributes more substantially to the employer’s mission.

During the last one or two work periods, the student should be doing the work of a graduate professional with about one year of experience. Thus, paying the student the rate of 75-85% of a graduate professional is a tremendous financial bargain!

Where a particular student is placed within the salary range for a particular work period might be determined by the quality of the student’s academic and job performance.

Relating Co-Op salaries to the salaries offered graduating professionals has the following benefits:

1. As the scale for graduating professionals changes due to inflation, demand, etc. the Co-Op salary is automatically adjusted.
2. The method allows Co-Op salaries to be influenced by local cost of living and general employer practices.
3. The method eliminates the inconsistencies in relating Co-Op salaries to student semester classifications.
4. Co-Op salaries can be adjusted slightly to recognize above average or below average job or academic performance.

Salaries offered to prospective Co-Op students for the first work period should be competitive with those being tendered by other employers, as the initial salary is one of the factors prospective Co-Op students consider in deciding between competing offers.
Cooperative Education Agreement

Employer: ____________________________________________

Contact Person: ___________________________________ Title: _______________________

Address:___________________________________________ __________________________
___________________________________________________ __________________________

Telephone: ____________________________ Fax: ______ ____________________________

E-Mail: ___________________________________________ ___________________________

The goals of the Co-Op Program are to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between the employer and CSU, whereby qualified students gain progressively responsible, paid, career-related experience and the employer is assisted in the recruitment and development of outstanding employees. It is the intention of this program to increase direct cooperation between education, business and industry in the development of an educated and trained work force.

CSU Responsibilities:
1. Maintain contact with the employer. The coordinator will act as a facilitator between the university, employer, and student.
2. Inform student of job opportunities and refer qualified candidates to the employer.
3. Provide the employer with information about the student’s academic preparation and employment background which may be pertinent to the student’s employment.
4. Inform the employer of any changes in the student’s work or academic status.
5. The coordinator will contact the employer by phone or in person on occasion to discuss the student’s progress.

Employer Responsibilities:
1. Provide coordinator with a suitable Co-Op job description. Outlining the professional-level employment, with assignments of increasing responsibility, related to the student’s field of study.
2. Allow a reasonable amount of time to fill the position (placements may require 6 months notice).
3. Make a commitment of at least two semesters to the student and the Co-Op position.
4. Adhere to federal and state laws regarding Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO).
5. Provide student employees with quality supervision and provide supervisors with specific information about the policies and guidelines of the CSU Co-Op program.
6. Inform the coordinator of any changes in the student’s work status or if any situation arises.
7. Complete the student’s performance evaluation and return to the coordinator each semester.
8. Permit on-site visits and/or phone calls by the coordinator to observe the student’s work.

The CSU Center for Career Development and Co-Op Coordinator reserve the right to determine whether the position is suitable for Cooperative Education.

Further, the employer agrees not to make an offer of employment to undergraduate students which would be in conflict with the student’s academic obligations and commitments. The employer is not obligated to offer the student permanent employment upon graduation, nor is the student obligated to accept any such offer, should it be made.

_________________________ _________________________
Employers Signature Coordinator’s Signature
Cooperative Education
Supervisor Evaluation

Student’s Name: __________
Salary: $______ Per _____
Current Semester: ☐ Fall ☐ Spring ☐ Summer
Number of Work Periods: _____
Supervisor: ______
Company: ______

Please provide a brief description of the student’s position:

_____

Student’s relationship with others: Please feel free to comment.
☐ Exceptionally well accepted.
☐ Works well with others.
☐ Gets along satisfactorily with others.
☐ Has some difficulty working with others.
☐ Works very poorly with others.
Comments:

Judgment/Decision-Making Skills: Please feel free to comment.
☐ Exceptionally mature.
☐ Above average in making decisions.
☐ Usually makes the right decision.
☐ Often uses poor judgment.
☐ Consistently uses bad judgment.
Comments:

Ability to learn: Please feel free to comment.
☐ Learns very quickly.
☐ Learns readily.
☐ Average learner.
☐ Rather slow learner.
☐ Very slow learner.
Comments:
**Attitude/Application to work:** Please feel free to comment.
- Outstanding enthusiasm.
- Very interested and industrious.
- Average in diligence and interest.
- Somewhat indifferent.
- Uninterested.

Comments:

**Dependability:** Please feel free to comment.
- Completely dependable.
- Above average dependability.
- Usually dependable.
- Sometimes neglectful or careless.
- Unreliable.

Comments:

**Initiative:** Please feel free to comment.
- Proceeds well with little or no supervision.
- Goes ahead independently at times.
- Does all assigned work.
- Hesitates.
- Requires prompting.

Comments:

**Quality of Work:** Please feel free to comment.
- Excellent.
- Very Good.
- Average.
- Below Average.
- Very Poor.

Comments:

**Attendance/Punctuality:** Please feel free to comment.
- Regular.
- Irregular.

Comments:

**Overall Performance:**
- Outstanding.
- Very Good.
- Average.
- Marginal.
- Unsatisfactory.

Are there ways you would like to expand this student’s role in future semesters within your organization, i.e. new tasks, challenges, etc.?

Supervisor’s Signature ____________________________ Date __________________

Student’s Signature _______________________________ Date __________________