Engineering Cooperative Education

The University of Wisconsin-Platteville Engineering, Mathematics and Science Cooperative Education program offers cooperative education (co-op) opportunities for students pursuing degrees in the following areas:

- Civil Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Engineering Physics
- Environmental Engineering
- Industrial Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Software Engineering
- Mathematics
- Computer Science
- Chemistry

What is Cooperative Education?
Cooperative education is a plan of education which effectively combines classroom learning and on-the-job experience so that one kind of learning illustrates and develops the other. The program takes its name from the close cooperation between the academic institution, assuring that the work experience received will contribute significantly to the student's overall growth and professional development. Concurrently, the participating company receives numerous benefits from creative and enthusiastic students and contact with the university.

What are the Benefits for a Student that Registers for a Co-op Assignment?
- Practical application of classroom studies
- Confirmation of career choice
- Acquisition of specialized engineering skills
- Better understanding of how industry works
- Better understanding of how to work with people
- The salary earned will aid in financing the student's education
- Increased confidence in one's own abilities and judgments
- Starting salary upon graduation is usually higher than those students that have not participated in the co-op program

What are the Benefits for an Employer of a Co-op Student?
- Opportunity to evaluate the potential for permanent employment based on performance rather than an interview
- Favorable publicity on campus, affecting students outside the co-op programs as well
- Opportunity to address lower priority projects with lower cost employees
- Co-op students tend to progress faster, go farther and stay longer than employees who did not have co-op experience
- Training costs decrease because a substantial portion is done at co-op salary rather than permanent salary

How the Program Works - the Student Perspective
Students who have completed the first semester in their sophomore year with a minimum G.P.A. of 2.5 are eligible for the program. Students who do not meet these requirements and believe that there are extenuating circumstances for their situation should meet with the director of the co-op program. (NOTE: Some companies will request students who are completing their freshman year of studies. Students should watch the co-op postings for these special cases.) Students prepare a résumé and submit it through UW Pioneer Career Network, UW-Platteville’s electronic job posting board.

How the Program Works - the Employer Perspective
Employers should provide a job description and any requirements the co-op student must meet. Interviews may be done on campus, by phone or at the employers site. Terms of employment (time period, salary, fringe benefits, transportation, etc.) are negotiated directly between the employer and the student. Once a student has accepted a co-op position, a supervisor should be designated and orientation to the company should be provided. The supervisor should evaluate the co-op student at regular intervals. Recognizing that the co-op student is a trainee, the assigned work should provide a varied experience. There is no obligation to hire the student for another work period or as a permanent employee.

Are Students Guaranteed a Co-op Assignment?
The number and types of positions offered vary each semester depending on the needs of the companies involved in the co-op program. The co-op office staff cannot guarantee that every student interested in co-op in a given semester will be placed in a position.
Will Co-op Participants Extend Their Graduation Dates?
Students enrolled in the program generally take five, and sometimes six years to complete a bachelor’s degree. For various reasons, co-op won’t be for all students. However, for many it will enhance classroom learning. Usually the salary along with the experience gained outweigh the extension of undergraduate studies.

Will Students Receive A Salary?
Wages are based on many factors including the engineering major, academic skills of the student, market demand and geographic area. Many employers provide some benefits or scholarships.

What Do Students Say About the Experience?
Co-op participants indicate that combining their classroom exercises with actual engineering situations are an excellent way to learn more about the real-world working environment. The co-op experience also assists with college finances and postgraduation employment prospects.

What Do Employers of Co-op Students Have to Say?
Employers indicate that the program has mutual benefits to the employer and the student. Employers are able to train prospective employees in the practicalities of engineering and expose students to the rules, procedures, reports and ways of doing things that meet accepted industry standards. Company professionals profit from the knowledge of the student and often can keep up-to-date on what is being taught in the classroom.

For More Information:
Contact the EMS Cooperative Education Office, 1 University Plaza, Platteville WI 53818-3099. Phone: 608.342.1686, Fax: 608.342.1566

For general information on the university and its programs, consult the University of Wisconsin-Platteville home page at www.uwplatt.edu or contact Prospective Student Services, UW-Platteville, 1 University Plaza, Platteville WI 53818-3099 or call toll-free 877.897.5288 or locally 608.342.1068.

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