

# Cooperative Education - Career Center

## COOPERATIVE EDUCATION & INTERNSHIPS: INTRODUCTION

Cooperative Education at Montana State University-Northern is part of a nationwide college/university program that integrates career-related work experience with academic course work.

Cooperative Education enhances academic course work by providing a realistic look at a chosen field and adding relevancy to classroom studies. Outcomes include professional skills development, maturity and increased motivation. A successful co-op experience also greatly increases employment opportunities upon graduation.

The term "internship" may be preferred or traditionally used with some employers or agencies. In most cases the guidelines described here are applicable to a co-op or internship and the terms are synonymous. In some programs there is a difference and students should check with their advisor or program director. Internships handled through the Career Center will operate under the same guidelines that follow.

## CO-OP REGISTRATION & SELECTION

Interested students should:

- Stop by the Career Center and make an appointment to discuss your needs and possible opportunities. Student applicants are selected for a co-op position by the co-op employer.
- CHECK with your academic advisor for requirements specific to their program. (Requirements vary by major or emphasis)

## CO-OP SCHEDULING

A co-op experience can be either a full-time or part-time position, depending on the need of the employer and the student's class schedule. Co-op/intern students are usually paid. Pay varies depending on the skill and experience of the student, as well as the type of business or agency. Some students complete two or more co-op experiences with the same employer at upgraded levels, alternating with a semester on campus. Experience with different employers is often preferred. A parallel co-op, consisting of combining part-time work with part-time school, is possible when jobs are within the Havre area.

## CREDITS

Credits earned per semester range from one to twelve depending on amount of hours worked and program regulations. Students must check with program director or faculty advisor and the Financial Aid Office regarding credit load.

## FEES

Students must register for a co-op/internship just as they do for any class and pay the per credit fee. All students receiving financial aid are strongly urged to contact the Financial Aid Office to determine possible impact on financial status.

## HOUSING

Some employers provide housing and assist with living expenses. For those that don't, housing and living expenses are the responsibility of the student.

## EVALUATION OF CO-OP EXPERIENCE

Both the university and the employer evaluate the co-op student. It is important to have ongoing communications between the employer's supervisor, the student employee, and the Career Center Coordinator. The final pass/fail grade is assigned by the Career Center Director.

## CO-OP POSITIONS

University staff help to develop co-op sites and make necessary arrangements; however, students may generate a co-op/intern position at an employer of their choice with the assistance and approval of the Career Center.

## BENEFITS

### Earn Credits AND a Salary

In most cases, co-op/intern students receive paid work experience and earn credits toward a degree.

### View Careers

Working in the field helps to strengthen and refine career goals. Frequently, the realistic work experience will point out the usefulness of additional courses or the pursuit of a minor which could improve employability.

### Build a Strong Resume

In-depth work experiences are invaluable in building a strong resume and identifying references. The opportunity to meet and work with professionals is extremely helpful in job search and networking activities. Many students are offered full-time positions by the co-op employer following graduation.

### Strengthen Interpersonal Skills

Important aspects of any job include developing the ability to work cooperatively with others, learning when to listen and when to speak, dealing with pressure, and developing effective communication and supervisory skills. Professionalism and maturity are additional benefits.

### Gain Insight into the Hiring Process

Co-op students learn about hiring procedures including job openings, interviewing, networking, personnel policies, fringe benefits and employment issues.

## 18 REASONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR GOING ON A CO-OP ASSIGNMENT

- To obtain practical experience in my field.
- To help in choosing a career.
- To apply skills and knowledge learned in school.
- To earn money to support myself while in school.
- To build an employment history.
- To enhance or add to classroom training.
- To obtain work experience.
- To try various jobs in my field to see if I'd be happy doing them.
- To set up contacts or possibilities for future employment.
- To learn.
- To prepare for my career.
- To gain a better understanding of the ultimate job possibilities in my major area.
- To gain exposure to different jobs.
- To use as a reference for graduate school.
- To work with equipment the university doesn't have.
- To find out what it's like to work in a regular, full-time job.
- To obtain credits.
- To grow (develop confidence and learn to interact professionally).

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION...

Cooperative Education registration is completed electronically through *CareerExpress*. Please go to [www.msun.edu/career/co-ops.aspx](http://www.msun.edu/career/co-ops.aspx) for further information. Contact the Career Center at 406-265-4198 with questions.