



HANDOUT SERIES

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

→ Life after Rensselaer Starts Here

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW DOES CO-OP WORK?

Undergraduate students are required to complete two work terms, one of which must be a semester. Most students choose consecutive terms such as spring-summer (January to August) or summer-fall (June to December). It is also permissible to work non-consecutive terms. Undergraduates may elect to add additional co-op terms (typically summers or a semester with advisor approval). Graduate students have the option of working one term (semester or summer) or both up to one academic year.

Students are not permitted to work two consecutive semesters, except in some academic undergraduate majors such as Chemical Engineering, where it may be necessary. Permission to work consecutive terms should be obtained from a counselor in the Career Development Center (CDC).

WHEN DO STUDENTS TYPICALLY GO OUT ON CO-OP?

Some students go on co-op early in their academic program because they are unsure of their career plans and hope to experience will aid in future decision making. Other students choose to co-op after completing more courses, because they can take on additional challenges at work. In either case, discuss your plans with your academic advisor and review "Co-op Information by Major" (Co-op section of CDC website).

ARE THERE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CO-OP PROGRAM?

- Have a minimum 2.0 GPA (undergraduate students); 3.2 GPA for graduate students
- Have at least one semester of full-time study remaining before graduation
- Attend a "Co-op Briefing" after accepting a position; register on Joblink
- Write a 3-5 page "work report" at conclusion of co-op term(s)
- Attend a "Co-op Debriefing" after first co-op term(s); register on Joblink

HOW DO I APPLY?

Register on-line, through Joblink, submit the \$5.00 annual registration fee at the CDC, and post your resume. This will enable you to participate in on-campus recruiting activities.

HOW WILL I FIND A JOB?

Most applicants find their job through the co-op program one of the career fairs. However, you may also search for a job on your own. If you pursue a job on your own, the position should be cleared with the CDC before accepting the position.

DO I HAVE TO PAY TUITION WHILE ON CO-OP?

No. You would only pay tuition if you take classes while on co-op. You will also maintain your status as a full-time student during your co-op work term.

CAN I GET ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR CO-OP?

In general, credit is not given for co-op, except in Electrical & Computer Systems Engineering, Management, and EMAC/Communications. Check with your academic advisor before going on co-op to arrange for academic credit. Some students have also been able to use co-op as the basis for an independent study course.

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WHAT DO I DO ABOUT MEDICAL INSURANCE WHILE ON CO-OP?

If you live within 25 miles of campus, you will automatically be charged the Student Health Center fee and may use the Health Center as though you were taking classes. If you are more than 25 miles from the college, the Health Center fee is not charged, and you will not have access to the Center. You will be charged only for the Student Accident and Sickness Insurance policy unless you have waived the coverage (this must be done by September 15 each year!).

WHAT DO I DO ABOUT HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION WHILE I AM ON CO-OP?

Although you are ultimately responsible for finding housing and transportation, your co-op employer may assist you in the housing search. During your co-op interviews, it is appropriate to ask if the employer offers assistance in finding housing and if you will need a car as transportation to work. A career counselor will also be happy to provide advice on securing housing.

WILL CO-OP AFFECT MY FINANCIAL AID?

Financial Aid is a major concern for most co-op students. There is no guarantee your co-op earnings will not impact your financial aid package. However, all co-ops receiving need-based aid will fill out a "Living Expense Worksheet" to submit to Financial Aid after co-op. Please note that the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will be mailed to all students' permanent addresses on or about December 1st. The April deadline for submitting the FAFSA will not be extended for co-ops because they are away from campus.

HOW WILL I NEED TO FILE MY FEDERAL AND STATE TAX RETURNS?

First, you almost assuredly will have earned enough income that you will have to file a Federal tax return. Second, the state tax laws for filing differ by state. Talk to your co-op employer or refer to our Federal and State tax links for further information.

MAY I STILL WALK WITH MY CLASS DURING MAY COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES IF I GRADUATE IN DECEMBER BECAUSE OF CO-OP?

The Institute normally requires that students have no more than four credits remaining in their bachelor degree program to participate in Commencement. Because many co-op students graduate in December, they are permitted to walk as long as they have no more than 12 credits to complete. When you enroll in the co-op program, be sure to plan out the rest of your courses to be certain that you can participate in Commencement. (If you have between 5 and 12 credits, you will be asked to file a petition with the Registrar to walk at graduation.)

OTHER QUESTIONS? TALK TO A COUNSELOR IN THE CDC!

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