

GRADUATE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW DOES CO-OP WORK?

The Graduate Cooperative Education Program provides opportunities for students to work in paid positions related to their research or degree programs. Students have the option of working for one term (summer or semester) or more up to one calendar year.

DO I NEED TO GET PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM?

Yes. To obtain approval to apply for a co-op job, you should first talk to your faculty advisor. After you get a job offer, sign up for a Co-op Briefing with the Career Development Center. You will receive a "Co-op Work Plan" which then must be approved by the Graduate Program Director in your department, the Dean of Graduate Education, and the Office of International Services for Students & Scholars (international students only).

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CO-OP AND AN INTERNSHIP?

If you are working only during the summer, there may be no difference as far as an employer is concerned. However, if you are enrolled in the Co-op Program at Rensselaer, your work performance is monitored and your co-op experience is noted on your academic transcript. You are also required to write a work report at the end of your co-op experience.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME FOR A GRADUATE STUDENT TO GO ON CO-OP?

That will vary from student to student. Contact your faculty advisor to discuss your employment interests, how the job would contribute to your academic studies, and when a co-op job would fit in best with your degree program.

ARE THERE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CO-OP PROGRAM?

Yes. You must have: (a) A minimum 3.2 GPA; (b) Been a student in the U.S. for at least nine months (international students); (c) At least one semester of full-time study remaining before graduation.

HOW DO I FIND A CO-OP POSITION?

Set up your account on Joblink and post your resume. This will enable you to participate in on-campus recruiting activities and to submit resumes for relevant positions online. In addition, participate in Career Fairs, talk to faculty about job leads, and post your resume directly to corporate websites. Once offered a co-op position, you should tell the employer that it is not finalized until approved by the faculty.

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

No. However, you will maintain your status as a full-time student during your co-op employment.

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!).

HOW 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 I NEED TO FILE 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 Federal and State tax links online for further information.

I'M AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT; ARE THERE OTHER THINGS THAT I SHOULD KNOW?

Yes. If you request co-op status for employment, this will be set up under your privileges for Curricular Practical Training (CPT). You are permitted one year of CPT employment prior to getting your degree. You are then also permitted to have one year of post-degree employment via Optional Practical Training (OPT). Please note that you must inform the Office of International Services for Students & Scholars (ISSS) of any change of address due to co-op within 10 days of moving.

OTHER QUESTIONS? TALK TO A COUNSELOR IN THE CCPD!

Updated October 2011