FAQ's: Cooperative Education - The Power of Experience

**Q: What is Co-op at Northeastern?**

**A:** Cooperative education, also known as “co-op,” is an educational model that allows students to alternate periods of full-time academic study with six month periods of paid, full-time employment related to the student’s major and areas of interest.

By integrating rigorous academic programs with challenging workplace experiences, Northeastern’s co-op program has grown into the largest and most successful in the world, involving more than 6,000 students and over 2,000 co-op locations throughout the US and internationally (i.e. Europe, Africa, South America, and Asia.)

**Q: What are the Benefits to You?**

**A:** With over one hundred years of co-op experience connecting students and employers, Northeastern has developed a system that allows you to bring talented and productive students into your workplace with ease and efficiency. Students can bring a fresh and exciting energy level to the workplace that can often lead to re-energizing other employees.

**Q: What Does the Co-op Partnership Offer You?**

**A:**
- Exposure to developing talent; a pipeline to potential employees.
- A simple, cost-effective way to meet human resource needs. Students are paid a salary, but do not require expensive benefits; such as health insurance.
- Six-month co-op periods, so students spend time working, not just training.
- The chance to create a flexible work environment that frees current employees to take on special projects or "hard to get to" tasks while co-op students take on recurring work.
- The enthusiasm, fresh perspective, and energy of talented young people eager to learn.

**Q: How Do You Participate in the Co-op Program?**

**A:**
- Contact the co-op coordinator listed on the next page.
- Submit a job description for the co-op position(s) you want to fill. *Examples of job descriptions will be available if needed.*
- Review résumés of potential students referred by your co-op coordinator.
- Interview students and make your final selections.

**Q: What Do You, As The Employer, Provide For Students?**

**A:** Your organization makes the hiring decisions and provides the student with training to perform the job. As with any employee, you would meet with the student to set goals, track performance, and complete an evaluation at the end of the work schedule period.
Q: What is the Length and Timing of Co-op?
A: The co-op cycle runs in 6-month terms providing you with year-round coverage. The terms take place from January through June and from July through December. Students work full-time for your organization during their co-op placement.

Q: What are Student Salaries and Is It Cost Effective?
A: Yes, very cost effective. The students are paid a salary commensurate with their skill level, the demands of the position, and the local economy, but there are no benefit requirements such as health care for the employer to cover. Since co-op salaries vary greatly by profession, please contact your co-op coordinator for sample salary ranges. Students are hired as employees, not as independent contractors, freelancers, or consultants.

Q: How Does the Co-op Partnership Work With Faculty and Staff?
A: We believe in building a partnership and getting to know your needs. The co-op faculty coordinators oversee specific majors, and as an employer, you are assigned a designated co-op faculty member. The coordinators support you and ensure that the co-op experience benefits both your organization and the student. Your coordinator provides a wide range of expertise helping define the responsibilities of a co-op job, referring appropriate students, answering questions, and troubleshooting any concerns/challenges.

Q: How Do The Students Benefit from Co-op?
A: Co-op brings classroom theory to life. Through real-world experience, students have the opportunity to apply what they have learned, test the waters in different workplace settings, and develop a network of professional contacts. Students return to the classroom with increased maturity, new capabilities, and practical knowledge to apply to their continued studies.

Employer Testimonial:

“As a small national nonprofit, the coop program has been critical in helping us expand our capacity in certain program and administrative areas. The program provides a pipeline of high-quality talent without the commitment of a salaried employee with benefits. This helps us achieve our mission in a cost-effective way. The coop program has brought us such great talent, we just hired a prior coop as a full-time employee.”

- Joanna Smith-Ramani, Director of Scale Strategies
Doorway to Dreams Fund

For more information about co-op, visit http://www.northeastern.edu/ashcoop/employers/

The University earned the number 1 ranking—in the Best Career and Job Placement Services category in The Princeton Review three out of the last five years.

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