Cooperative Education

**Best Practices for Employers:** To experience the most benefit from NU’s Co-op Program, we recommend the following:

**FINDING YOUR NEXT CO-OP**

**Posting positions on our co-op database**
- It is most favorable to post positions before the start of each recruitment cycle – see timelines
- New positions can be added through this link; reopening/updating jobs can be done with your contact

**Interview Process**
- Contact interviewees as soon as possible after reviewing resumes. Schedule first and second interviews in a timely fashion
- Promote your corporate culture so that students get a full sense of what you have to offer
- Update candidates on your hiring decisions. Inform students promptly if they are not chosen for a position to maintain a positive image.
- Consider providing immediate interview feedback to students and NU co-op faculty (the faculty will work with the student to help them learn from their experiences)
- Keep your co-op faculty member updated on your hiring process so we can send you more resumes, make changes to the job description, “place” a student in the job, close the position, etc.

**ON-BOARDING/ORIENTING A CO-OP**

**Hiring paperwork**
- Work with your HR department to ensure the student completes all necessary paperwork with you
- Some employers send offer letters and/or have students sign “hiring agreements”
- Review and clarify offered pay rate, sick leave, and vacation policies. (NU co-ops are told that employers do not have to offer them any vacation time. That is up to each employer. Sick time is dependent on the new state law – see link above – and the criteria of your company)
- Review and clarify expected start and end dates (NU has co-op dates that have been set to best meet employer needs and ensure “full coverage” for you.) That being said, employers have discretion to alter start and end dates by a few days to best meet your needs.

If your budget allows, arrange for the current co-op to help train the incoming co-op.

**When the student begins working**
- The first day of employment, go over all the expectations of the student - assume nothing! (possible items to cover: hours of operation, dress code, internet use, calling in sick, cell phones, etc.)
- Clarify salary, work hours, reporting time/date, OT, sick time (HRM usually handles these functions)
- Provide any necessary training on office equipment, office supplies, procedures
- Explain any office policies regarding breaks, flextime, coverage, etc.
- Establish learning outcome/objectives/goals with the student (see next page)
- Explain how the student work will be evaluated, by whom, how often, and when

**To enhance their educational and professional experience**
- Introduce them to the department and “key players”
- Identify a “mentor” for the student
- Identify who to go to if there’s a problem
- Include student in departmental activities and as many “big picture” meetings as possible (helps them to understand the organization and their individual contribution)
- Consider providing information sessions or informational interviewing opportunities (Q&A lunch sessions with upper management, for example)

*Please continue on next page*
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**Establish and model appropriate boundaries between work and personal life:**
- If student works from home periodically, clarify expectations regarding work hours
- If personal cell phones are used for work purposes, establish guidelines (Will the supervisor be texting the student? Will the student be contacted during non-work hours? What kind of response time is expected during off-hours? Should the student call co-workers on their personal cell phones?)
- Consider providing a company laptop if the student will be working at home frequently
- Keep the NU co-op faculty member in the loop regarding telecommuting arrangements/ work hours.

**Schedule meetings throughout the work period to:**
- Monitor student’s general performance and give frequent feedback
- Measure progress towards goals/learning outcomes
- Report back to the NU co-op faculty member if there are problems and concerns

**ARE THERE EXTRA “STEPS OR ITEMS” THAT NU REQUESTS FROM EMPLOYERS?**

**There are a couple of database/housekeeping items NU asks the employers to do every cycle:**
- **Confirm the student’s supervisor:** You will get an email a few weeks into the term asking for you to confirm the students you are supervising. This will update our database and then prompt the supervisor with their login information to complete evaluations at the end of a co-op.
- **Learning Outcomes:** While on a co-op, we ask students to set (and later assess) Learning Outcomes they would like to achieve. Learning outcomes provide the opportunity for students to focus specifically on what they want to learn and achieve on co-op. Students are asked to create up to five learning outcome statements describing what students would like to be able to do as a result of their co-op experience. Once a student develops and enters learning outcomes into the online system, the outcomes are forwarded to the supervisor for review. Ideally, this review will lead to a discussion between the student and supervisor to ensure that the outcomes are indeed achievable and perhaps how the student can be supported to achieve them. This handout will explain your role in this process.

**EVALUATING A CO-OP – FINISHING A CO-OP TERM**

**Conclusions/Evaluations**
- Close to the end of the co-op cycle, you will get an email asking for you to complete an evaluation for each co-op you supervise. This link describes that process in more detail.
- Please schedule a meeting with the student to review overall work performance and final evaluation that will be submitted online
- Identify skills developed (strengths) and areas that may need improvement
- Suggest future work experiences that might be beneficial to the student
- Encourage the student to network, complete informational interviews, return to your company, etc.

Thank you so much for supervising NU co-op students!