

# ***Guide For Employers***



**AUBURN**

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COOPERATIVE EDUCATION  
PROGRAM

***Since 1937***

**Auburn University  
Auburn, Alabama**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Cooperative Education (Co-Op) Program provides graduate and undergraduate students academically enhancing employment opportunities in industry, business, and government. These employment opportunities build upon strong instructional programs to ensure that students receive an outstanding education that prepares them intellectually, technically, culturally, ethically, and socially for the demands and opportunities of an increasingly changing world.

## **WHAT IS COOPERATIVE EDUCATION?**

Cooperative Education is the integration of classroom theory with practical work experience under which students alternate attendance at school with periods of professional employment. A three-way partnership is designed between the cooperating employer, the Auburn University Co-Op Program, and the participating students to merge professional opportunities with university talent and resources to achieve many distinct as well as common goals.

Some of the ideals upon which the program is based are:

1. Students' work should be related as closely as possible to their field of study and interest within the field.
2. The employment is considered to be a regular, continuing, and essential element in the educational process, and some minimum amount of employment and minimum standard of performance must be included in the requirement for the Co-Op Certificate presented by the school.
3. The work experience will ideally increase in difficulty and responsibility as the student progresses through the academic curriculum, and shall parallel as closely as possible progress through the academic phases.

We invite you to join us as a Cooperative Education employer in subscribing to these ideals.

## **THE AUBURN CO-OP PROGRAM**

Cooperative Education was founded in 1906 at the University of Cincinnati. Auburn University established its program in 1937 with an initial class of twelve pairs of engineering students. Until the mid-1960's, the program was available only to engineering students. The program has since expanded greatly and is now available to many other schools and colleges within the University.

The Auburn Co-Op program currently represents approximately 25 distinct curricula, participating with over 175 industrial, business, and government employers. The various job assignments are located in many states with the majority of students

employed in the Southeastern United States. New students and employers are added frequently and the future looks extremely bright.

## **AVAILABLE MAJORS**

The Co-Op Program involves student participation from a number of curricula. A listing of typical curricula offered is available upon request from the Auburn Co-Op Program.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

The Co-Op Program is a three-way partnership between the employer, the student, and the university. For the program to succeed and provide expected benefits, each partner must understand the role of the other partners.

## **THE EMPLOYER'S ROLE**

The employer should enter the Co-Op Program convinced of its merit and with a sincere intent to . . .

1. Provide students with meaningful employment related to their field of study.
2. Provide continuing employment (alternate work semesters) throughout his or her work semester eligibility unless the student proves to be unacceptable or when economic or other factors make it impractical or impossible.
3. Adhere to the university's calendar relative to report to work and school dates. However, changeover dates can be altered as long as students return to campus for start of classes as prescribed and complete all final exams before going to work.
4. Provide proper supervision of the work performed. This includes completing and returning *Supervisor Evaluation Forms* to the university.
5. Support the university Co-Op Coordinators in counseling students regarding their academic achievements and/or deficiencies, personality development, and vocational aspirations.
6. Cooperate in allowing university Co-Op Coordinators to visit and counsel students while at work.

## **THE UNIVERSITY'S ROLE**

The purpose of the Cooperative Education Program Office, which represents the university, is to administer the program with the assistance of participating employers. Service is a key word in describing the role of the AU Co-Op Office, which is . . .

1. To counsel the student regarding opportunities available and in identifying employers most suited to his or her individual talents and aspirations.
2. To provide the prospective student with literature, application forms, and other information about the employer before any employment proposal is made.
3. To propose for employment consideration only those students who meet minimum criteria as agreed upon by the employer and the university. In addition, to advise the employer of the student's grades and any outstanding extracurricular achievements, Dean's List, awards, honors, etc.
4. To provide "feedback" to the employer through continuing coordination and counseling with the student relative to work assignments, job environment, personality conflicts, and any misunderstandings which may arise.

### **THE STUDENT'S ROLE**

The student's responsibilities extend equally to the university and to the employer. No plans to alter the partnership should be made without the knowledge and consent of both. Responsibilities include . . .

1. Acknowledgment that co-op is an educational program and is controlled by the school. The student and employer must consult with the AU Co-Op Office before any decisions or requested changes in the program are made.
2. To remain with their original employer unless a change in curriculum dictates a change of employer, or unless dropped by either the school or employer. In addition, to remain in the same alternating work/school sequence unless a conflict of academic course scheduling requires a change.
3. To be courteous, conscientious, and prompt with each work assignment, and to give the employer a full day's work for each day's pay.
4. To conform to company policies and procedures and follow safety rules explicitly.
5. Report to work and leave the job on the regularly scheduled dates established by the Auburn Co-Op Program Office unless special arrangements have been made with the employer to work during vacation periods.

### **STARTING A CO-OP PROGRAM**

Having decided that you wish to hire Auburn University co-op students . . .

1. The first step you should take is to contact the AU Co-Op Program Office staff to arrange an initial planning session. The Co-Op Coordinators will discuss the program with you and determine how the program can best work for you.

2. Plan the work assignments! Know what you want the student to do before he or she arrives.
3. Determine qualities (academic and personal) desired in a co-op applicant . . . we all want to place the right student in the right job! Only students meeting your requirements will be referred to you.

## **HIRING PROCEDURES**

There are several approaches that you may take in hiring co-op students. Probably the most effective way for employers to select the best candidate for the available position is to . . .

- Conduct on-campus interviews. Employers are always encouraged to attend one of Auburn's "Co-Op Interview Days," which are held each Fall and Spring semester.

If employers are unable to attend Co-Op Interview Day . . .

- Alternate dates and times can be arranged for employers to come to campus and interview students in the AU Co-Op Program office.

Or, another alternative . . . referrals can be made to you through e-mail.

Employers can invite students to meet with them at the potential work site. Some employers are limited by time, or by their travel budget (particularly those located far away from the Auburn-Opelika area). If this is the situation, telephone interviews can be arranged.

Regardless of which alternative you select, you should work together with a Co-Op Coordinator in the AU Co-Op Program Office to determine what majors you will be hiring, the number of positions you have available, candidate requirements (grade point average (GPA), etc.), and other relevant information.

In addition, our office will provide you with a "proposal" package for each student that you will be interviewing. This proposal will include a copy of the student's co-op résumé, approved work/school alternation schedule, and detailed transcript.

Once a hiring decision is made, the employer should contact both the student and the AU Co-Op Program Office to make them aware of the offer. It is suggested that an offer letter be sent to the student and a copy sent to the Co-Op Program office.

## ILLUSTRATED SCHEDULES OF THE PROGRAM

Co-Op students are considered regular full-time students. Students can begin their alternating schedules after completing the second semester of the freshman year. Some majors may require additional schoolwork before students can begin co-oping because of the curriculum requirements.

All students have a window of eligibility for starting co-op which usually closes during the junior year. Co-Op students alternate between work and school until they have completed a minimum of one year of work, then remain on campus for their senior year.

### Typical Work / School Co-Op Alternation Plans

School Semester	Plan A	Plan B	Plan C	Plan D	Plan E
1st year - Fall	School	School	School	School	School
1st year - Spring	School	School	School	School	School
1st year - Summer	<i>Work</i>	*	*	*	*
2nd year - Fall	School	<i>Work</i>	School	School	School
2nd year - Spring	<i>Work</i>	School	<i>Work</i>	<i>School</i>	School
2nd year - Summer	School	<i>Work</i>	School	<i>Work</i>	*
3rd year - Fall	<i>Work</i>	School	<i>Work</i>	School	<i>Work</i>
3rd year - Spring	School	<i>Work</i>	School	<i>Work</i>	School
3rd year - Summer	*	*	<i>Work</i>	School	<i>Work</i>
4th year - Fall	School	School	School	<i>Work</i>	School
4th year - Spring	School	School	School	School	<i>Work</i>
4th year - Summer	*	*	*	*	*
5th year - Fall	School	School	School	School	School
5th year - Spring	School	School	School	School	School

\* Optional Semester(s) - Extra Co-Op Work Semester(s), Internship(s), Study-Abroad, Summer Job(s), etc.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM**

The following are some suggestions for employers to help achieve a quality Co-Op Program that will be beneficial for all.

### **CO-OP COORDINATOR**

A quality program needs a clearly identified contact person for administrative matters. This person would be the contact for the university, co-op supervisors, and the student at work. The contact position can be held by an immediate supervisor of the student or someone from Human Resources. The individual's responsibilities should include:

- Planning for Work Assignments - Be sure the work is in the student's field of study and that it involves increasing responsibility as the student gains experience. Also, discuss these work assignments with the students so they will know what is expected of them.
- Housing Assistance - Students may need help getting settled in an area that is new to them, especially if this is their first work assignment.
- Personal Concerns - The initial terms of adjustment can be difficult for new co-op students, and it is often helpful for these students to know that someone recognizes these potential difficulties and is available to help if needed.

### **SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION**

Frequent contact with the supervisor is very important for co-op students. Make the students feel part of the organization and keep them busy. Evaluate the co-op before the end of the work semester and point out strengths and areas that need improving.

### **SALARIES**

Co-Op salaries vary but normally a student earns enough to pay for immediate living expenses and to save some to be applied toward school expenses.

Some employers provide full fringe benefits for their co-ops. The *Auburn University Cooperative Education Salary Survey* is available to help you determine a reasonable salary scale for your organization.

## **PROGRAM OPERATION**

### **ALTERNATION SCHEDULES**

Students work on an alternating semester basis, and each student has a unique work/school "Co-Op Alternation Schedule." Once a student begins on a particular Alternation Schedule, the student agrees to remain on that schedule until completion of

the program. The semester system calendar calls for each co-op student to work one summer, spring, and fall semester.

## **ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Each semester we will send the employer a copy of each co-op student's grade report. If a student does not maintain a C+ grade point average he or she can be placed on Co-Op Warning. Subsequent poor academic performance can require that the student be dropped from the AU Co-Op Program.

## **WORK PERFORMANCE**

A *Supervisor Evaluation Form* on each student will be e-mailed to you late in the work semester. This evaluation should be completed by the immediate supervisor, reviewed with the student, and returned to the AU Co-Op Program office. It is recommended that the supervisor have a conference with the student mid-way through the work semester so that the student and supervisor can provide feedback to one another.

## **JOB / EMPLOYER CHANGES**

Once a student makes the decision to accept employment with a particular employer, considering other offers of employment is not allowed. Most students will remain with the same employer the entire time they are in the Co-Op Program. The only exceptions to this are if the student changes majors and the employer cannot provide work that is related to the new major, or if the employer decides to terminate the employment.

## **CO-OP CALENDAR**

A *Co-Op Calendar* is published each year which lists the specific dates that school semesters begin and end, and also the dates that students should begin and end their co-op work semesters. To some extent, the dates for starting and ending work are flexible, and can be decided upon by the employer and the student. However, we ask that students be back on campus in ample time to begin school when their work semester ends. Also, a student should not stay past the ending work date if it will hinder another co-op student from starting the work semester at the scheduled time.

## **SUMMARY**

The success of the Auburn Co-Op Program is dependent upon all partners in the co-op relationship working together and adhering to standard guidelines. This *Guide for Employers* was prepared to outline those guidelines which are necessary for an effective and efficient Co-Op Program. Our staff welcomes any comments or questions that you may have about Auburn's Co-Op Program. We at the Cooperative Education office look forward to partnering with you in implementing a successful Co-Op Program at your company or agency.

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**Visit the website at:**

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