MENTORING A CO-OP STUDENT

High performance, valuable contributions, and professional skills will make the Cooperative Education experience beneficial for the employer and more rewarding for the student. These skills, abilities and behaviors are only truly developed by a mutual commitment of everyone involved; the employer by providing ways for the student to engage in the work environment, the co-op student through openness to learning, and the Co-Op office by offering additional support. Integral parts of the learning process are clear communication of company expectations, committed managers and supervisors, and follow up on student progress. By providing the student with continual informal feedback plus formal student performance reviews, the student will have clear expectations and understanding where he/she needs to improve. The Cooperative Education Office at Case Western Reserve University hopes that the co-op experience is a win-win for all involved.

ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL CO-OP

GOAL: CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY AND A STRUCTURE FOR STUDENTS TO INTEGRATE THEORY WITH PRACTICE

- Prepare and plan for a valuable learning experience for the student
- Communicate your goals for the co-op assignment, and your performance expectations
- Show your commitment to the student by providing necessary training, tools, and resources
- Pay the student a fair salary
- Conduct regular meetings with student and provide feedback on performance and productivity
- Encourage student to participate in professional and organizational activities
- Address any concerns or issues in a timely and professional manner
- Provide performance evaluation

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE QUALITIES THAT MAKE A SUCCESSFUL MENTOR?

- Honesty
- Highly respected
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Experienced in their field
- Kind and patient
- Good motivator, able to create a motivating environment
- Ability to teach
- Excellence on the job
- Effectively demonstrates the company values
- Strong work ethic
- Develops the student’s potential
• Deals well with the inherent ambiguity and complexity of the company
• Committed to learning

WHAT ARE THE ROLES A MENTOR PLAYS?

AS A MENTOR, YOU WILL WEAR MANY HATS...AND PLAY MANY ROLES! SOME ARE...

The Communicator...

▪ Listens to the concerns and questions of the co-op student
▪ Provides an open environment for interaction
▪ Schedules uninterrupted time regularly (weekly meetings) with the co-op student
▪ Serves as the sounding board for ideas/concerns

The Counselor...

▪ Helps evaluate career options with the Co-op
▪ Assists in planning to reach personal goals
▪ Demonstrates commitment to the student

The Coach...

▪ Sets mutual goals for the mentoring relationship
▪ Helps clarify performance goals on the job
▪ Teaches technical and other skills
▪ Evaluates performance
▪ Identifies developmental needs
▪ Serves as a role model
▪ Teaches work ethics

The Advisor...

▪ Introduces the Co-op to the workplace
▪ Helps identify obstacles to career progression
▪ Communicates the realities of the world of work
▪ Reviews progress on a regular basis
▪ Plans activities and experiences for the co-op
▪ Teaches company policies and procedures

The Primary Contact...

▪ Networks for the co-op student
▪ Intervenes on behalf of the co-op student
▪ Provides a link with educational/employment opportunities
• Identifies resources
• Arranges involvement in appropriate activities
• Communicates organizational goals/objectives

WHY MENTOR?
Mentoring creates opportunities to share knowledge, experience and expertise with promising, less experienced employees (co-op students). This can happen in both formal and informal settings throughout the work day. The benefits are numerous.

Benefits to the Organization:

• Attracts and retains high performers
• Enhances professional development
• Promotes diversity of thought and style
• Develops leadership talent
• Improves productivity
• Create inclusion
• Develops a line of succession
• Fosters a collaborative and creative environment
• Eases the transition to new assignments
• Strengthens corporate competitive advantage
• Enhances strategic initiatives

Benefits to the Mentor:

• Gains satisfaction in sharing his/her expertise with others
• Re-energized while working with talented and energetic students
• Learns fresh ideas and new perspectives from co-op student
• Can form a relationship with the University via the student
• Identify future hires

Benefits to the Co-op Student:

• Learn from the mentor’s expertise
• Receive feedback on their performance
• Gain a broader understanding of the organization
• Clarifies academic and professional goals
• Learn specific skills and knowledge in their field of study
• Learn how to be successful in the workplace
• Begins to network with seasoned professionals
• Develop communication and interpersonal skills
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Co-op is an opportunity to develop skills, abilities and behaviors through both hands-on learning and exposure to the professional work environment. The following skills and attributes are necessary for a successful career in business and industry and co-op is the time for the student to practice and develop them. Below are some suggested activities for developing these competencies.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP THESE COMPETENCIES:

Student Participation in:

- Departmental and company meetings
- Inter-departmental cross training
- Supervisor shadowing (ex. meetings, luncheons, technical presentations)
- Project responsibility (including hypothesis driven research)
- Additional technical training (ex. “Lunch and learn”, vendor presentations)
- Increased responsibility and challenge throughout the co-op assignment
- Networking with managers and employees
- Final assignment presentation

Communication
Good listening skills
Written and verbal communication
Oral presentation

Interpersonal
Approachable
Respectful
Maturity
Self-awareness
Diversity
Motivation
Honest
Team player

Positive attitude
Accountable
Responsible
Leadership
Show initiative
Creative solutions
Assume responsibility
Build good relationships and networks
Assesses the situation and appropriately communicates ideas and solutions
Self-confident
Apply academic coursework
Technical abilities and knowledge
High quality work
Solutions are innovative and have lasting benefit

Applies course work and acquired skills to projects

Follows project guidelines

Learn skills necessary for job

Thinking

Critical thinking

Analytical skills

Open to learning

Innovative

Solutions-oriented

Professional work skills

Self managed learning

Adaptable

Results-oriented

Detail-oriented

Time management

Quality

Engineering and business ethics

Meets performances objectives, timelines and deadlines

Works within budget objectives

Professionalism

Communications

Follow through/ follow up

Business etiquette

Customer service, both internal and external

Business Knowledge

Customer focus

Organizational awareness

Supports business process and corporate objectives