what is co-op?

about the UC Co-op Program

The University of Cincinnati is a comprehensive state university located in scenic and historic Cincinnati. Although the majority of our 35,000 students are Ohio residents, we are a heterogeneous community with students from all fifty states and many other countries. The University traces its origins to 1819, and among many remarkable innovations to emanate from UC was the 1906 introduction of the first program of cooperative education. Initiated by Dean Herman Schneider in UC's College of Engineering, cooperative education was a new teaching methodology which changed twentieth century education. Today cooperative education is practiced worldwide. In the United States alone, more than 97,000 employers and 250,000 students participate in cooperative education.

The Professional Practice Program (Co-op) provides eligible students with the most comprehensive education and professional preparation available. Cooperative education involves the planned and monitored alternation of salaried professional degree-related work experience with academic study. Co-op enriches the student's education because work experiences reinforce what is learned in the classroom. In addition, exposure to the real world of work and career options promotes the student's sense of independence and professional maturity. Upon graduation the student is fully and realistically prepared to work effectively alongside other professionals in the field.
The University of Cincinnati operates on a quarterly academic calendar. Co-op students alternate between full-time off-campus work assignments and full-time school quarters. The calendar is carefully structured to enable a participating employer to hire a pair of students who alternate work quarters to provide full coverage over the course of the entire year. By graduation, co-op students have accumulated an average of 18 months of professional discipline-related work experience in their degree field.

Your primary requirements as a participating employer are to:

- Provide work experiences directly related to the student’s field of study
- Provide appropriate supervision and related appraisal of the student’s performance
- Provide assistance in helping the students achieve their identified learning objectives
- Pay a wage which is commensurate with the full-time co-op position
- Evaluate the student’s performance and then discuss the assessment with them

Employer feedback is a critical component of the cooperative education process. Regular quarterly appraisals of the student’s performance help the student to grow and develop as a professional. The appraisal/evaluation of performance should be completed and then shared with the student at the end of the work quarter. The Division of Professional Practice will provide an online evaluation form for employers to utilize in their appraisal process.

The co-op student’s Professional Practice faculty member will use the employer’s appraisal to help students learn from their performance and prepare for the future based upon this critical assessment provided by employers. The University can also learn much about its educational processes through this connection with the industry and make modifications to enhance our ability to provide employers with the best qualified students.
why should I?

why employers should participate

More than 1,500 participating employers throughout the United States and abroad know that UC co-ops are an excellent resource for meeting short-range, skilled employee needs today and for identifying and training their organizational leaders of tomorrow. Major studies have proven that employment of co-op students is a cost-effective method of recruitment and development of human resources. Our co-op program is carefully designed and tailored to meet the individual needs of employers and the educational goals of student participants. Cooperative education will work for your organization too.

Employers who participates in UC’s Professional Practice Program accrue significant benefits because:

- Co-op is a proven cost-effective method to meet both immediate and long-range human resource needs.
- Co-op is an opportunity to evaluate potential career employees.
- Co-op students can perform well on some professional level assignments, thus freeing career employees for advanced responsibilities.
- Co-op decreases the turnover of graduates employed in career positions.
- Co-op is a ready source of obtaining employees.
- Co-op arrangements are ideal for technology transfer.

And co-op fosters ongoing productive relations between campus and employer communities. Co-op employers play an important role in providing feedback to the University of Cincinnati on the needs of industry.

benefits:
- cost-effective recruitment
- identifying potential career employees
- decreases turnover of graduates in career positions
- ideal for technology transfer
1 Contact Professional Practice at (513) 556-2667
2 Discuss employment needs with faculty member.
3 Provide brief description of job and company.
4 Review student resumes.
5 Select candidates and arrange for interviews.
6 Determine who to hire, make offer and inform faculty member.

It's that easy.

The UC program is uncluttered. There are no formal contracts, no long-term obligations, and paperwork is kept to a minimum. A phone call is all it takes to get started. When you are ready to establish a program just contact the Professional Practice office and we will refer you to the faculty member responsible for the discipline in which you are interested.

While we will be happy to help you determine the responsibilities of the proposed co-op position, you may want to have a brief description prepared before you initiate contact. We also recommend that you provide a brief description of your company that will give students a brief overview of your products, your services, size and location. The Professional Practice faculty member will help you determine when you can initiate the program based upon your ability to review resumes and/or portfolios, interview candidates, and make offers in the quarter prior to when the students will be available for a co-op assignment. The sooner we understand your needs, the sooner and easier it will be for us to accommodate you.

On the basis of individual and group meetings as well as the students' review and research of quarterly job opportunities and related information, students who meet the employer's criteria and have an interest in the position will be referred for your consideration by Professional Practice faculty.

After reviewing resumes and/or portfolios, normal hiring procedures are appropriate. Select those candidates you wish to interview and arrange for interviews, whether at your location, on campus at the Division of Professional Practice, or if you are a non-local employer scheduling phone interviews with the student candidates. The employer makes the decision who to hire and what salary to offer. The Professional Practice faculty member can make current co-op salary information available for your reference. We do ask that you notify the Professional Practice faculty member that you are working with concerning impending interviews and subsequent offers. The relationship and communication between the co-op employer and the co-op faculty member is critical to the successful facilitation of the co-op student selection process.

In making an offer to a student, we do request that the employer continue a student's employment for a full work quarter. While in a work assignment, co-op students are subject to the same policies and practices of the employer as are regular employees. Students are required to complete a minimum of two quarters with the same employer unless the employer does not invite the student to return for a second quarter. The Division of Professional Practice does not consider it appropriate for employers to engage the services of students as consultants or independent contractors when such an arrangement involves the student's official co-op work assignment. Students are advised not to accept co-op positions under these conditions. We also require that co-op firms be committed to considering students as equal opportunity, affirmative action employers.
Co-op salaries are determined by employers in a number of ways. Two of the most commonly considered factors are the students' work experience and academic classification. We recommend that the co-op salary be some percentage of the salary offered to a graduate professional in the same discipline. For example, students in their 5th or 6th co-op assignment might be paid 80-95% of a graduate professional salary.

It is inappropriate for students to be paid as consultants or independent contractors. There are serious questions about the legality of employers classifying co-ops as consultants or independent contractors under the Internal Revenue Code. Beyond legal questions, there are concerns about student protection under worker's compensation, deductions for taxes and social security, possible penalties for failure to pay self-employment taxes, and related issues which could have an adverse impact on the well-being of the student.

Granting a comprehensive benefit package is not a requirement for participation in a cooperative program, yet it is desirable to give the student opportunities that are afforded to regular employees i.e. training programs, workshops, comp time, bowling leagues, softball teams, etc. Since co-ops are considered employees of the company or agency, federal and state laws and regulations do apply.

While it is not a requirement, some employers may cover all or part of transportation and/or housing costs. Location of adequate housing is sometimes a short-term problem for students. However, housing and other arrangements associated with living away from campus, are the responsibility of the student and generally are handled so as not to interfere with starting and completing a work assignment on schedule. Most employers do provide some guidance to help prepare the student for relocation to the employer's community.