

Proposal Summary

Establishment of a University-Wide Cooperative Education Program

SUBJECT SPECIFICATION

The Office of the Provost proposes establishment of a Cooperative Education Program that will allow eligible undergraduate students to augment their academic study at Kent State University with an approved semester of full-time, career-related employment while still remaining a full-time student.

For the fall 2014 semester, the Cooperative Education Program will be piloted through the College of Applied Engineering, Sustainability and Technology¹ and be made available only to students declared in a major in that college. After that term, the program will be moved to Undergraduate Studies, to be administered by a dedicated position, open to all eligible undergraduate students and coordinated with the students' academic college.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For several years, students in the Aeronautics, Applied Engineering and other majors have struggled with undertaking semester-long full-time work experiences away from campus while trying to maintain full-time student status to keep their eligibility for aid, loan deferment and insurance, among other services/resources. These employment opportunities are highly desired, selective and in the student's chosen field. Some recent examples include the following:

Term	Co-Op Assignment	Students
Spring 2014	Delta Airlines (Atlanta)	1 from Aeronautics – Flight Technology
Spring 2014	United Airlines (Newark, Chicago, Houston)	3 from Aeronautics – Flight Technology
Fall 2013	NASA Glenn Research Center (Cleveland)	5 from Aeronautics – Aeronautical Systems Engineering Technology

Typically, these students end up taking a full-load of coursework or paying for a 12-credit internship or practicum course to keep their full-time student status.

In preparation of developing a cooperative education program, a review was conducted on cooperative education programs at 13 universities². In addition, members of the Provost's Office conducted extension discussions with the College of Applied Engineering, Sustainability and Technology and with administrators from the following offices: Bursar, Registrar, Controller, Career Services and Student Financial Aid.

Student Eligibility for the Co-Op Education Program

- Enrollment as a full-time student
- Admitted into a degree program (program cannot be fully online)
- Minimum cumulative 2.500 GPA at time of co-op application
- No holds on the student's record from any source (financial, academic, conduct)
- Cooperative position must directly relate to student's major or concentration
- Completion of two semesters (one semester for transfer students) at Kent State prior to the first co-op rotation

¹ The college will undergo a name change, effective for fall 2014, to the College of Aeronautics, Applied Engineering and Construction Management.

² Clemson University; Drexel University; Georgia Institute of Technology; Mississippi State University; North Carolina State University; Northeastern University; Ohio University; Rochester Institute of Technology; University of Akron; University of Alabama; University of Cincinnati, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Student Application Submissions

Completion of the Student/Employer Agreement (Appendix A), which will include the following:

- Student information (name, major, GPA, class standing, contact information)
- Employer information (name, address, contact)
- Co-op agreement (job description, start date, weekly hours and pay rate)
- Notice for international students studying on an F-1 visa
- Signed statement of understanding from the co-op student
- Signed statement of understanding from the co-op employer

Cooperative Education Registration

Student will register for COOP 20092 Cooperative Education, which will be administrated by the Provost's Office and carries no academic credit (i.e., 0 credit hours). The course also does not carry a grade; students will earn either the mark "Complete" or the mark "Not Complete" (Appendix B).

Enrollment in the course will be restricted by special approval. The course will not display in the Schedule of Classes. Students will be able to register only after submission and approval of all application forms.

COOP 20092 Cooperative Education will have variable title, allowing the addition of employer's name at the end of the title, e.g., "Cooperative Education: NASA," "Cooperative Education: Federal Aviation Administration." The course and variable title will appear on a student's transcript.

As the course carries no academic credit or grade, it will not count toward students' earned hours, GPA, residence, class standing, academic standing or institutional honors. The course will, however, be counted toward full-time enrollment and the Experiential Learning Requirement. Tuition will not be assessed for the course; instead, a special course fee will be applied to the student's account. The fee will support the cooperative education coordinator position in Undergraduate Studies.

Students wishing to earn academic credit and/or grade will be directed to register for a credit-bearing internship or practicum course. See page 3 for difference between a co-op and an internship or practicum.

Full-Time Enrollment Verification

The Kent State co-op administrator will complete and submit to the Office of the Registrar a "Cooperative (Co-Op) Education Program – Student Full-Time Enrollment Verification Request" (Appendix C) for the student to be designated and reported as a full-time student and for the student to continue having access to all student services and resources the student had before the co-op semester.

Students will not be eligible to receive financial aid or scholarships during the term they are on co-op assignment, but these awards can be reinstated upon their return to regular coursework. Students should contact with the Office of Student Financial Aid for more information.

Student Co-Op Administration

During the pilot phase in the College of Applied Engineering, Sustainability and Technology, oversight of students in a cooperative work experience will be done by Jackie A. Ruller, project manager in the dean's office who has been administrating the college's co-op and internship experiences over the past year.

Once the pilot phase is finished, and the cooperative education program is made available to all eligible undergraduate students, oversight will be done by a dedicated position in the Division of Undergraduate Studies.

The co-op administrator will periodically check in with the student while in a co-op semester. In addition, the student's academic unit may require assignments (e.g., weekly journal, final reflection paper). Students will be required to complete a mid-semester assessment of the experience (Appendix D). The students' co-op employer will be required to submit a student performance evaluation at the end of the semester (Appendix E).

Students who chose to leave the co-op employment within Kent State's course add/drop deadlines may do so by self-dropping the course. Students who leave the co-op employment after the add/drop deadlines must contact the co-op administrator, who will then enter the "Not Complete" mark for the course on the student's record. Any refund of the fee will follow normal procedures and deadlines.

Difference Between a Kent State Co-Op and an Internship or Practicum

Cooperative (Co-op) Education

1. A co-op is a joint venture between Kent State, a selected employer and the student.
2. Students are hired for full-time, paid positions that last the duration of a full semester (a small percentage of co-op positions may be unpaid).
3. The co-op employment directly relates to the student's declared program.
4. Co-op experiences typically occur in the fall or spring semester and may extend to multiple semesters that alternate with semesters of coursework.
5. More on-the-job training is offered through a co-op than an internship.
6. A co-op student is not expected to be on campus and/or living in a residence hall during a co-op semester.
7. Students frequently start at higher salaries and higher levels of responsibility than interns.
8. Students do not earn academic credit or a grade for a co-op.
9. Students pay the university a flat fee for a co-op to maintain full-time enrollment status during the semester of co-op employment.

Internship/Practicum

1. Students are responsible for finding internship/practicum opportunities.
2. An internship/practicum can be full- or part-time, paid or unpaid, depending on the employer and the career field.
3. The internship/practicum experience relates to the student's occupational goal.
4. An internship/practicum is usually a one-time assignment, often occurring in the summer.
5. The internship/practicum typically does not interfere with classes due to timing, but less training is given because of this.
6. An internship/practicum opportunity takes place on or off campus.
7. Students do not miss a semester of coursework to complete an internship/practicum.
8. Students earn academic credit and a grade for an internship/practicum course.
9. Students pay the university tuition for an internship/practicum, based on the set credit hours of the course.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES

The alternative is to continue to require students with co-op work prospects to register and pay for 12+ credit hours to maintain full-time student status. The consequence is students who struggle to balance a full coursework load with a full-time job opportunity in their chosen field, or those who choose to abandon one for the other.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION

Recommendation is to establish a formal university-wide cooperative education program to ensure consistency of policies and procedures. The creation of a course will allow the co-op experience to be displayed on the student transcript, as well as to initiate procedural communication among various student services to maintain the student's full-time enrollment status while away on a co-op work assignment.

Benefits for students in cooperative education program:

- Apply classroom learning in a work setting and gain on-the-job experience
- Enhance academic performance through increased understanding
- Realistically confirm choice of major and career
- Strengthen level of maturity, confidence and sense of responsibility
- Increase understanding of human relations and business/industry operations
- Begin building a network of professionals in the chosen field
- Observe an employer before accepting full-time employment

Benefits for cooperative education employers:

- Participate in the education of potential permanent employees
- Evaluate a student's on-the-job performance before making a long-term commitment
- Gain the "inside track" on recruiting quality students for permanent employment
- Offer assistance to senior professionals, releasing them for more complex responsibilities
- Reduce costs and time associated with recruiting and training new graduates
- Obtain immediate productivity from co-op graduates
- Maintain high visibility with students, faculty and administrators at Kent State University

TIMETABLE AND ACTIONS REQUIRED

- Approval by the Provost (May 2014)
- Approval by Educational Policies Council (May 2014)
- Approval by Faculty Senate (July 2014)
- Implementation (Fall 2014)