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MISSION STATEMENT

The Georgia Southern University Cooperative Education (Co-Op) Program provides graduate and undergraduate students academically enhancing employment opportunities in industry, business, and government. The GSU Co-Op Program also offers relevant quality work experiences for all qualified students who desire to enrich their academic program of study with planned, progressive and monitored work experiences. 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.

CO-OP HISTORY and DEFINITION

Cooperative Education was founded at the University of Cincinnati in 1906 by Herman Schneider, Dean of the College of Engineering.

Dean Schneider made two observations based on his own and others’ careers:

1. Every profession has many facets which cannot be taught in the classroom, but can be learned through direct on-the-job experience.
2. Most students find it necessary to work part-time while taking classes and during vacation periods in order to earn money to help pay for their education. Usually part-time and vacation work has little or no relationship to ultimate career choices, and therefore does not contribute to professional education or to the competitiveness of the student.

Dean Schneider envisioned an educational system which would blend these observations into a meaningful program for the student. Under this system the educational institution designs an academic calendar which provides an employer with a pair of students to cover a job on a year-round basis through alternating periods of work and study.

The institution assumes the responsibility for verifying positions related to the students’ professional objectives and thus provides the knowledge which only comes through experience. These are regular paying positions, so the students are able to utilize their savings from earnings to help fund their education or for any other purpose they desire.

Approximately 1,000 + schools across the nation have adopted Dean Schneider's philosophy as a valid educational method. Co-op has also gone international.

Cooperative Education is a balanced educational program in which undergraduate and graduate students participate in planned work experiences related to their academic major and/or career interests. Students supplement their classroom learning with relevant, practical training and experience. The purpose of the Cooperative Education Program at Georgia Southern University is to produce optimal educational results for students by integrating planned work experience with classroom theory.
ADVANTAGES TO PARTICIPANTS

Some advantages are tangible while others, ultimately more important, have value not easily measured in terms of dollars. A few of the advantages co-op students enjoy are as follows:

- As a co-op student you will become **better prepared technically** than your classmates. You not only acquire valuable knowledge but see this knowledge applied in business and industrial situations on the job. Your class-work comes alive, which is stimulating, and encourages you to make extra efforts in your studies. This point is verified by the evidence which shows co-ops achieve a higher GPA on average than that of the overall student body.

- You will learn **valuable lessons in human relations** through associations in an adult environment. The maturity and discipline gained in this manner is usually reflected in your personal relations with others. After graduation, these associations will help ease your transition from student to professional.

- You will **observe professionals** working in your chosen field. This unique opportunity will help you decide early in your academic education whether you have chosen the right vocation. Many co-ops feel this is the greatest benefit they receive from the Co-Op Program.

- Savings from wages can be used to significantly **contribute to education expenses**. There is no substitute for the learning gained from the lessons of self discipline and management of personal finances. Savings can be substantial; however, most co-ops require additional financial assistance in meeting educational expenses. Individual thrift will largely determine the amount of your savings which can be utilized to defray college expenses.

EXPLANATION OF ROTATIONS

Georgia Southern University supports the **alternating plan** and **parallel plan** for cooperative education:

- The **alternating plan** allows co-op students to work full-time one semester and return to school the next semester. (One semester of work and one semester of school is called **one rotation**.) The University requires students to commit to their co-op position for at least two rotations.

- The University also offers the **parallel** co-op plan. This plan requires a student to work four or more work/school combination periods scheduled over two academic years. It is required that the student work at least 16 hours per week but not more than 30 hours per week while maintaining a part-time student status.

**Required Co-op Work Terms & Typical Work/School Experiences**

Incoming first term freshman are required to complete at least one term of school before the Co-Op Office staff can work with them to assist in the co-op job search process. All students must complete two equivalent academic terms of college before being authorized to report to work as Georgia Southern University Co-Op Student.

Transfer students may compete for a co-op job offer during their first academic term at GSU. Transfer students are eligible to report to work after completing one academic term at Georgia Southern University.
Work/School Rotation & Calendar

Sample Full-Time Co-Op Alternation Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
<th>Summer Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Part-Time Co-Op Alternation Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
<th>Summer Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School/Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>School/Work</td>
<td>School/Work</td>
<td>School/Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transfer students with up to two years transfer credit are usually eligible to participate in the co-op program. Such schedules depend on the term in which a student enrolls at Georgia Southern University and the number of terms necessary to complete degree requirements. Under the semester system calendar, each co-op student normally works, at a minimum, one summer, spring, and/or fall term. The schedules involve students working their first term beginning summer, fall, or spring. A few students have non-traditional co-op work schedules due to unusual schedules on which classes are offered in their departments.

Starting to work as a co-op student during the summer term is the schedule most popular with students; however, it is also the most competitive sequence on which to obtain a co-op job offer. For this sequence, we generally have a significant percentage of the students competing for approximately 10-15% of the jobs.

Approximately 85-90% of the total co-op job openings call for a first work term in the fall or spring. In general, fewer students compete for these openings and find the quality of the co-op work assignments is higher. Students flexible about when they can begin work maximize their chances of securing co-op positions.

Employer representatives are very sensitive to what students say. If you are open to beginning work fall, spring, or summer term but say to an employer that you prefer starting in the summer, the employer will usually not consider you as a candidate for fall or spring openings.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Student Eligibility Requirements

The Georgia Southern University Co-Op Program is open to all full-time undergraduate and graduate students meeting the following requirements:

- Have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.50 (3.00 for graduate students)
- Have completed a minimum of 30 credit hours
- Have attended Georgia Southern for one semester (For Transfer Students)
- Be available to participate in at least two alternating semesters (40 hrs/week) OR four parallel semesters (16 – 30 hrs/week) of a work rotation.

**Note: If a student’s GPA falls below the requirement, the co-op must be approved by their Faculty/Academic Advisor.**
Physical Requirements

Employers are making every effort to accommodate the physically challenged. However, due to the wide variety of tasks to which a co-op may be assigned, the exact nature of any challenge should be brought to the attention of the Co-Op Coordinator and the prospective employer. Most co-op job offers are contingent upon applicants passing a pre-employment physical which often includes a drug test.

COURSE CREDIT

Co-Op courses are available to students for all three academic terms (Fall, Spring, and Summer Semesters). During the school terms you will be registered for classes. During work terms, you will be registered for a course titled COOP. Students enrolled in an alternating plan will register for the 12 credit hour course (full-time) and students enrolled in a parallel plan will register for the 9 credit hour course (part-time).

Participating Curricula

The Cooperative Education Program is offered to all students at Georgia Southern University, both graduate and undergraduate. Some academic programs have their own experiential education requirements (i.e. Nursing, Teaching, Sports Management, Construction Management, and Communication Art).

HOW TO GET STARTED

1. Determine where you want to work:
   - Narrow down three target industry areas and companies.
   - Narrow down three target job descriptions.
   - Narrow down three geographic locations to look for employment.

2. Learn to write a resume, so you can develop one resume for each job target:
   - Attend a resume writing workshop
   - Write a draft of your own resume
   - Ask Career Services to critique your resume before forwarding it to the database
   - Place your resume on Eagle Career Net

3. Learn how to generate job leads:
   - Contact employers by making face-to-face visits, phone calls, and writing cover letters
   - Locate job leads in places such as Career Services, Faculty, Employment Agencies, Newspapers and Magazines, and through NETWORKING

4. Get help in obtaining interviews:
   - Sign up for on campus interviews through Eagle Career Net
• Post your resume on **Eagle Career Net**
• Learn to navigate Internet job searches
• Use company directories in the Career Resource Center (CRC)

5. **Learn how to prepare for interviews:**

• Sign up in Career Services for a mock interview
• Read books on interview prep (available in the CRC)
• Research the employer or company
• **PRACTICE! PRACTICE! PRACTICE!**

6. **Get help in what to do when getting a job offer:**

• How to negotiate salary and determine the cost of living
• How to ask questions about job benefits
• How to write an acceptance and/or declination letter
• How to write a thank you letter

**CONTACTING OTHER CAMPUS DEPARTMENTS**

**FACULTY/ACADEMIC ADVISOR**

It is vitally important that the student meet with his/her appointed Faculty/Academic Advisor to develop a four year academic plan and develop a complete understanding of when to pursue a Co-Op opportunity.

**HOUSING**

**On-Campus**

Upon written notification from the student that he/she will vacate his/her housing space early due to completion of graduation requirements, to participate in a University cooperative education, study abroad, transfer to another institution, or practice teaching program and that the student will not return before the end of the contract period, this contract shall terminate upon the completion of the last semester of residence and the University's verification of the matters asserted in the student's notification.

1. Notification must be received by the Housing Office by **November 1** of the Fall Semester immediately proceeding the cancelled term.

2. Students who provide notification from **November 2 – December 1** will be assessed a **$100 contract cancellation fee**.

3. Students who provide notification **December 2 up to the first day of the Spring Semester** will be assessed a **$200 contract cancellation fee**.

**Off-Campus**

It is the student’s responsibility to contact their leasing agent(s) and inquire about subleasing and whether it is allowed. If subleasing is allowed, the student will then be held accountable for finding a subleaser.
FINANCIAL AID

Students need to meet their Financial Counselor, located in the Rosenwald Building, to discuss Financial Aid package.

**Financial Aid for the summer is not automatically granted you have to apply.**

PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION

Contact Parking and Transportation to discuss parking permits if necessary.

MEAL PLAN

Contact Eagle Dining Services to discuss cancellation of meal plans if necessary.

CONTINUED CONTACT REQUIRED WITH GSU CO-OP COORDINATOR

After securing a co-op job, continuous student – GSU Co-op Coordinator communication is necessary to ensure an effective, professional work experience purposefully intermingled with expanding academic progress. Students are expected to maintain contact with the Co-Op Program office each and every school and work term until they have completed all required work terms.

Proper coordination can be achieved when students communicate to the University the extent of the on-the-job learning environment. This will enable the Co-Op Program staff to compliment and encourage employers for quality work assignments while pointing out weak or marginal assignments which need strengthening. Constructive criticism often supplies the necessary information to the employer’s Co-Op Coordinator to improve work situations.

RESPONSIBILITIES

STUDENT OBLIGATIONS

To the Program

1. To maintain a complete and up-to-date file, including a resume and a current transcript with the co-op coordinator. Also, to update resume on Eagle Career Net each semester.

2. To have at least 30 semester hours or equivalent of college credit and an overall GPA of at least 2.5 for undergraduate students and a 3.0 for graduate students at the time of application. Exceptions may be made upon written recommendation of the student’s advisor, but under no circumstances will a student participate without a minimum 2.0 overall GPA.

3. Inform the co-op coordinator of acceptance of a co-op offer. Inform the co-op coordinator of contact information including home and work phone number, address, company name, supervisor name, and supervisor’s phone number and email address.

4. Maintain a minimum overall GPA of 2.5 during academic semesters while participating in co-op.
5. Meet specific requirements of the GSU academic department for acceptance and retention in the co-op program. *(If receiving partial or full academic credit for the Co-op experience)*

6. Maintain regular contact with Academic Advisor and Co-op Coordinator throughout work and academic semesters. Notify them of any conditions or problems which might threaten the student’s continuance in the program.

**To the Employer**

1. Accept employer’s conditions for participation in the program, which may include a minimum number of required work semesters.

2. Conform to company policies and procedures and follow safety rules explicitly.

3. Maintain a satisfactory work record as attested by the performance evaluation submitted by the employer at the midterm and at the end of each work semester. Give your employer a full day’s work for each day paid and recognize the fact that this will be possible only if you apply yourself promptly, courteously, and conscientiously to each work assignment. It as much your responsibility as it is your supervisor’s to see that you stay productive work.

4. You must remain with your original employer unless a change in curriculum dictates a change in employer, or unless you are terminated by your employer.

5. You must remain on the same alternation schedule unless an academic scheduling conflict arises or a schedule change is requested by your employer.

6. Meet specific requirements of the employer for acceptance and retention in the co-op program.

7. Once employed, you should willingly transfer to various company locations if requested to do so by your employer.

*Violation of any of the preceding obligations can result in your being dropped from the program.*

**GSU COOPERATIVE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OBLIGATIONS**

1. To provide advising, guidance, and assistance with academic support to participating students.

2. To provide a method to register working co-op students for their courses.

3. To inform students of co-op opportunities and ensure that their resumes are sent to prospective employers.

4. To provide employers with the most recent student information and inform the employers of any changes in the information.

5. Develop new cooperative education employer sites.

6. To assist students and employers with any questions and concerns they may have.
EMPLOYER OBLIGATIONS
1. To ensure that the student’s work is related to his/her major.
2. To provide a safe and healthy work environment.
3. To provide a planned work sequence for each student such that he/she is given progressively increasing work responsibilities. Tasks should relate to those that the student would perform if hired as a full-time permanent employee in that position.
4. To provide a written job description outlining work assignments for each rotation.
5. To develop learning objectives with the student.
6. To provide a reasonable salary, generally 60 percent of the earnings of a newly hired professional in that field. And, if appropriate, assist with housing arrangements for each semester the student works.
7. To inform the Co-Op Coordinator of openings promptly so they can be advertised and you can receive resumes of suitable candidates.

WORK PLACE EXPECTATIONS

What You Can Expect From Your Employer
- Description of quality job assignments/responsibilities’ and their wage/benefit package
- Variety of career-related experiences
- Integrate you into the total team
- Provide regular informally feedback and formal feedback through a written evaluation once a Semester
- Provide a safe, healthy, and learning work environment
- No discussion of co-workers personnel issues
- Supervisor will include you in the process for some decisions but not all decisions

What the Employer Will Expect From You
- You are expected on the job every day, whether “good day” or “bad days”
- Arrive on time . . . you have to get out of bed when the alarm goes off or you’ll be late for work
- Arrive ready to work
- Call the office if you are going to be late; unless it is approved in advance by your supervisor
- Keep your word
- Be responsible for your actions
- Be prompt in getting reports or assignments finished
- Arrive ahead of time for meetings and appointments

BE WILLING TO WORK
- Work 8 hours for 8 hours of pay
- Take on extra work when there is a bottleneck in the office
- Work late when there is a rush . . . working overtime (evenings and weekends) is often required to complete some jobs on time
• Cheerfully accept additional responsibilities
• Be flexible and willing to try new things
• Keep yourself mentally and physically in shape
• Ask others how you can assist them or ask your supervisor for additional projects

BE SELF-MOTIVATING
• Periodically visit your supervisor to gain feedback on your progress
• Monitor your own performance
• Ask for additional tasks or responsibilities
• Learn to deal with “goofier work” and some down time because it is in every job
• Create and monitor your own career plan with inputs from your supervisor

BE RESPECTFUL
• Show respect for yourself and others
• Look and dress neatly . . . dress for success
• Interact with others formally unless and until you are told to do otherwise
• Establish good relationships with your co-workers and supervisor
• Disputes and conflicts should be handled in a mature and professional fashion
• Learn what kind of behavior works and what does not
• Participate in social activities so that others can get to know you better but keep your actions and reputation in mind
• Avoid internal office politics
• Maintain discretion in the amount of socializing on work time
• Do not complain about the job or about other students and employees in public
• Be patient not only with your co-workers and boss but also with the tasks associated with your job
• Learn to listen properly to those around you; take the time to comprehend fully and assimilate their requests or instructions
• Be sensitive to others; do not gossip
• Keep a sense of humor, but make sure it’s appropriate humor; avoid profanity or crudeness
• Be courteous, considerate, and tactful in your interactions with other employees
• Be aware of cultural differences
• Be open-minded and conscientiously search for the best way to accomplish things
• Know when to question the work of others or to make suggestions of a critical nature
• Be receptive to constructive criticism
• Be willing to accept employers’ decisions dealing with personnel issues: discipline, hiring, promotions, pay raises and reclassification

UTILIZE TEAMWORK SKILLS
• Work With Others
• Understand and contribute to the organization’s goals/objectives
• Understand and work within the culture of the group
• Plan and make decisions with others and support the outcomes
• Respect the thoughts and opinions of others in the group
• Exercise “give and take” to achieve group results
• Seek a team approach as appropriate
• Lead when appropriate, mobilizing the team for high performance