



# COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM



STUDENT HANDBOOK



**OSWEGO**  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



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## *The Overview*

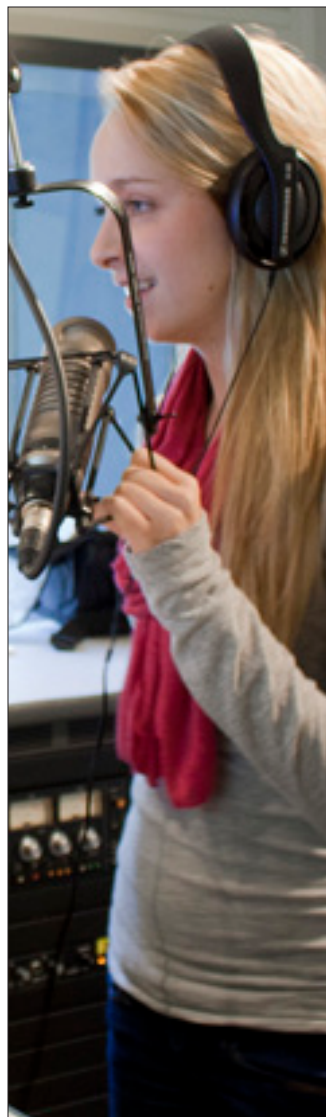
Deciding your career path early on in your education can increase your chances at job security after graduation. A co-op placement can provide a number of benefits by helping you gain practical knowledge and experience that you can bring back to the classroom. Nothing will teach you more about your career than “learning by doing”.

In addition, a co-op could help you finance some of your education and increase the likelihood of finding a job after graduation.

SUNY Oswego is committed to providing students a competitive education that combines knowledge and application. Employers have joined our co-op program to give you the best possible chance to discover where your talents lie and where you want to go with your education. The program offers the best of both worlds: using what you already know to gain experience, and learning new things that will help your future.

### **What is cooperative education?**

In a co-op you enter a partnership with the school and an employer to gain practical experience relevant to your major. Each work term is a six-month paid experience with one of our employer sponsors. Having a co-op is an integrated learning experience that enhances both your studies and career developments. SUNY Oswego will support your endeavor with a variety of resources preparing you for interviews, showing you what to expect on the job, and how to draw on your workplace and classroom experience to achieve your goals.



## *The Overview continued...*

### **Why co-op?**

- Explore and confirm your major and career options early
- Enhance your coursework through real-world work experience
- Develop job search and interviewing skills
- Develop a network of professional contacts
- Earn a competitive salary
- Great job experience for your resume
- Co-op will show on a transcript
- Your job prospects increase

### **What departments participate in co-op?**

SUNY Oswego's co-op program currently is a pilot program in sixteen departments:

- Accounting & Finance
- Art (Studio)
- Broadcasting
- Chemistry
- Communication & Social Interaction
- Computer Science
- Graphic Design
- HR Management
- Journalism
- Marketing & management
- Mathematics
- Physics
- Public Relations
- Software Engineering
- Technology Management
- Theatre

Students from these departments will work in conjunction with your academic and co-op advisors to discover your eligibility for the program.

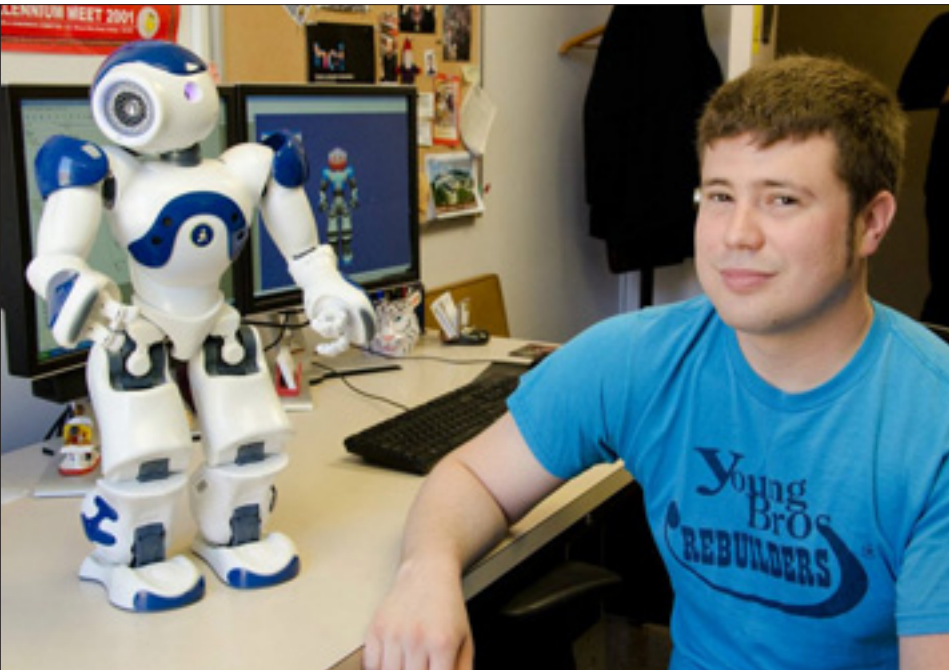
### **What role does my co-op advisor play?**

Your co-op advisor works with you one-on-one during your job search and your employment. They help you prepare for co-op, identify your strengths and weaknesses, and learn from your experiences. Your advisor will also assist you with any questions you have during employment.

### **What is a work term?**

Work terms typically run for six months through two academic semesters in either the spring and the summer, or the summer and the fall. You and your co-op advisor will determine your work terms.

Co-op Schedule & Preparation



CO-OP CYCLES				
FALL CO-OP CYCLE Co-op July to December	Fall	Spring	Summer Sessions I & II	Summer Sessions III & IV
Freshman Year	CLASSES	CLASSES	VACATION	VACATION
Sophomore Year	CLASSES	CLASSES	CLASSES	CO-OP
Junior Year	CO-OP	CLASSES	CLASSES	VACATION
Senior Year	CLASSES	CLASSES		
SPRING CO-OP CYCLE Co-op January to June	Fall	Spring	Summer Sessions I & II	Summer Sessions III & IV
Freshman Year	CLASSES	CLASSES	VACATION	VACATION
Sophomore Year	CLASSES	CLASSES	CLASSES	CLASSES
Junior Year	CLASSES	CO-OP	CO-OP	VACATION
Senior Year	CLASSES	CLASSES		

## Co-op Schedule and Preparation continued...

### Co-op Schedule

#### How many work terms can I do?

Under SUNY Oswego's pilot program we can allow you one work term. Full-time matriculated undergraduate and graduate students may complete one six-month work term prior to graduation. Work terms run July through December, and January through June.

#### When do I start?

If you begin at SUNY Oswego as a freshmen, you could start your first work term as early as the second semester of your sophomore year. If you're a transfer student, you can begin after completing at least one academic semester in your major. Academic advisors will work closely with you before starting a co-op.

#### Co-op Eligibility

You must be in good academic standing. Before starting work, you must have:

- at least two complete semesters at full-time status or one complete full-time semester as a transfer student.
- a signed release form from your academic advisor to participate in co-op.

- satisfactorily complete and pass of a mandatory co-op prep class.
- a co-op approved by a co-op coordinator.

#### GPA Requirements

GPA requirements for a co-op are based on rigorous employer standards. You must be in good academic standing as defined by SUNY policy.

### Co-op Preparation

#### Co-op Prep Class

Before you can search for a job, you need to complete a mandatory prep class. This class teaches such topics as career goal development, resume building, conducting successful job searches, interviewing skills, and professional conduct.

#### How to Register for Co-op

A co-op advisor will work with you to register you for your first work term.



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# Getting a Job

## How do I get a job?

First, meet with your academic advisor to determine if you have met all academic requirements necessary before a co-op. Then contact your co-op advisor for an appointment to discuss your career interests, personal and professional goals, resume, and guidelines for finding a job.

## The co-op database

The co-op database, Laker Leads, provides an open system to upload your resume and search for positions with our employer sponsors. Once you write a profile and post your resume, with the help of your co-op advisor you can search and sort available positions according to your major, preferences and skill set.

## Am I guaranteed a job?

Your co-op advisor will guide you through the job search process and provide support when needed. However, it is your responsibility to find and secure employment. Insufficient GPA, inflexible schedules and poor interviewing are common barriers to employment. SUNY Oswego cannot guarantee you a co-op placement.

## Can I work outside New York?

Students are encouraged to consider opportunities outside the local area and out of state. The more flexible you are about travel, the more opportunities you will have. Co-op positions exist around the country for students in selected majors. Your co-op advisor may already have established connections in your preferred area or can advise you on how to develop leads.



## *Getting a Job continued...*

### **Can I find a job on my own?**

Your co-op advisor can help you develop options with employers not already registered in the co-op database. You can also contact employers on your own, but you should discuss your plans with your advisor and get his or her approval well in advance of the anticipated work term. Your position must be verified by SUNY Oswego before you can accept employment. It is your responsibility to inform the employer that you are a co-op student and you will be returning to school.

### **How do I accept a job?**

Your acceptance of the job offer is considered final when you confirm it with your employer either verbally or in writing. Once you have accepted, you must confirm with your employer and your co-op advisor in writing, and also notify all employers with who you have had contact. You may not accept more than one job offer.

### **Pre-employment screening**

Some employers require applicants to undergo a screening process including drug testing, credit checks, physical examinations, and criminal record checks.

Failure to complete or pass these checks may prohibit you from being hired or applying for co-op positions in the future.

### **Employer confidentiality / non-disclosure agreements**

In order to protect patentable or confidential information, you may be asked to sign an agreement of non-disclosure with your employer. All co-ops must uphold such agreements responsibly as legally binding contracts. Information you gather during employment in these cases cannot be used in academic projects or reports without the express permission of your employer. Discuss your concerns about signing any such agreement with your co-op advisor.

### **Consequences of social networking**

You should be aware that social networking sites such as Facebook are sometimes used by employers to learn more about applicants prior to hiring. If you blog or use social media you should take care when posting personal information. Illegal or irresponsible behavior can be grounds for discharge or refusal of employment.



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## *Workin through Co-op*

### **Code of student conduct**

As a co-op student, you are a representative of SUNY Oswego and your performance has an impact on the college, the employer, and future co-op placements while on the job. You are expected to observe SUNY Oswego's Code of Student Conduct.

### **What happens first on the job?**

At the beginning of your co-op term, you and your supervisor will define the duties involved in your job.

### **How much will I be paid?**

Compensation is set by the employer and depends on the industry, the level of the position, and the local economy. Your cooperative education advisor can give you specific compensation information for your program. You do not pay tuition while you are on co-op.



## *Working through co-op continued...*

### **Tuition and Financial Aid**

While you are enrolled for a co-op assignment, you are full time. You will not be charged tuition. However, there may be other fees and charges you are responsible for. Contact the financial aid office concerning your co-op earnings and your financial aid eligibility.

### **Where do I live during and after co-op?**

It is important to plan your housing needs ahead of time. If you live in a residence hall and accept a local position, you may continue to live in the residence hall. If you co-op out of the area, students typically are responsible for finding their own housing. Some companies may provide housing allowance or provide housing options to assist students. If you were in on-campus housing prior to co-op, you are guaranteed on campus housing when you return. However, preferences are not guaranteed.

### **Do I get a vacation?**

You are expected to work from the beginning of the co-op term to the end of your assignment. Some employers may

need you to work beyond the published dates of your co-op term. Discuss exact start and end dates with your employer and co-op advisor.

### **Can I take time off while on co-op?**

Employers expect you to be responsible and show regular and punctual attendance. As an employee, you must arrange for your personal and college-related commitments to take place outside of regular working hours. Taking time off for special circumstances requires permission from your employer. If you have military training obligations or student athletic team obligations, notify your co-op advisor and your prospective employer prior to the start of your co-op assignment.

### **Active military duty**

If you are called for active duty while on co-op, immediately call your academic advisor, work, and co-op advisor to ensure the appropriate military leave is recorded with the college.

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## Completing a co-op job

### Co-op performance evaluation

At the beginning of your co-op, you and your co-op advisor list your duties on a student performance evaluation form. Toward the end of your co-op, ask your employer to complete the form with you and discuss it before your co-op term is over. Then, submit the form to your co-op advisor when you return to campus.

### Reflection process options

To receive full audit credit for your co-op experience, departments may have you return from co-op and participate in a discussion or presentation about your experience during co-op. Your academic and co-op advisor will help you review the co-op experience, assess the skills you developed, and begin a project that demonstrates what you have learned. This project can take the form of a PowerPoint presentation, a written report, or a group discussion as determined by you, your academic advisor and co-op advisor.



## Federal Policies



### Getting credit for co-op

Students who successfully participate in co-op receive an audit credit for each six-month work term. Grades of Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U) will be assigned by your co-op advisor's recommendation and recorded on your transcript. To ensure you receive full audit credit for your co-op:

- Return the "Co-op Student Performance Evaluation" form completed by your employer.
- Complete the reflection process as determined by you and your academic advisor if required.
- Meet with your co-op advisor to ensure that all requirements have been met.

### Identification / work eligibility

Each time you begin a new job, you will be asked to verify both your work eligibility and your identity by completing an I-9 form provided by the employer.

### Social Security requirement

All students must have a social security number before working on a co-op.

### Income tax

Federal law requires you to complete a W-4 form with your employer before beginning work. This form ensures that appropriate federal and state taxes will be deducted from your wages. If your employer does not deduct these taxes, you are still responsible for payment.

### Unemployment

Once your co-op assignment with an employer has ended, you are not eligible to collect unemployment insurance benefits.

### Students with disabilities

It is required by law to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you think you will need reasonable accommodation to apply for co-op position or perform essential functions, you should inform your co-op advisor and potential employer.

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## *Workplace Issues*

### **Absences**

Contact your employer if you must be absent because of illness or emergency. If you must be absent for more than one day, contact your co-op advisor as well to explain your situation. If you suffer a work-related injury or illness, be sure to follow your employer's guidelines for formally reporting such an issue.

### **Medical Leave**

Sometimes a health issue may arise that significantly effects your ability to participate in co-op. A medical leave of absence for physical or emotional problems is permissible when necessary.

### **Dealing with stressful work environments**

Talk with your immediate supervisors if you experience work-related difficulties in any regard. Should you feel uncomfortable speaking with your supervisor for any reason, address your concerns by phone or email to your co-op advisor. Do not postpone such a discussion if something makes you personally uncomfortable.



## *Workplace Issues continued...*

### **Discharge**

Employers may discharge you for a variety of reasons relating to your work performance or personal conduct. Your employer will customarily contact your co-op advisor to resolve issues when possible. If you are discharged by your employer, contact your co-op advisor immediately.

### **Deserting a job**

If you are absent without notification, or quit your job without speaking with your co-op advisor first, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Discrimination**

SUNY Oswego does not condone discrimination or harassment of any kind toward students. If you experience any manner of personal discrimination in the workplace, notify your supervisor and

co-op advisor as soon as it occurs. If you feel that your fellow employees or your supervisor might retaliate, speak again with your co-op advisor. You will not be penalized in any way for reporting such a situation. SUNY Oswego will work to resolve these issues with your employer informally, or will remove you from work without any change to your status.

### **Sexual harassment**

Any form of sexual harassment or gender discrimination is a serious concern. Sexual advances made by individuals with authority is a common type of sexual harassment. Sexually suggestive or hostile comments and behavior can also be violations of federal sexual harassment statutes. If you feel you are a victim of sexual harassment or discrimination, contact your co-op advisor immediately.



To request more information  
e-mail *co-op@oswego.edu*

[www.oswego.edu/co-op](http://www.oswego.edu/co-op)

