

The money's great.
The contacts are super.
The job experience is priceless

now selected by liberal arts, science, language, business and computer science majors. Antioch College, Drexel, Georgia Tech, Northeastern and Cincinnati offer a large variety of co-op experiences. Cooperative education students at these and many other schools work for government agencies (i.e., IRS, National Park Service, CIA and National Security Agency) or big name companies like IBM, Texas Instruments, Exxon, Eastman Kodak, Xerox, General Motors, DuPont and Sears.

Cooperative education depends on a unique kind of cooperation between the college or university and the participating employers to form a total program which blends students' academic and career interests with productive work experience. Co-op students can earn anywhere from \$7-14,000 annually, with engineering students bringing home the largest paychecks.

In order to enter a co-op program, you must be enrolled in a participating college or university. Requirements and screening processes differ with each school, so students must investigate carefully. Most co-ops follow one of the following patterns or a combination:



To get a head start: Combining school and work

•**Alternating:** Students attend school full time for one semester and work full time (off campus) the following semester. They graduate after 5 years, alternating work and study until all requirements have been met.

•**Parallel:** Students work part-time (15-25 hours per week) while they attend classes. Graduation may be after 4 years, although many students find it takes longer to complete all requirements.

What makes co-op so attractive is that the students earn "real money" (equaling salaries of employees with similar job responsibilities) so they can pay more of their college costs and depend less on grants and loans. Valuable contacts give students an "edge" on the job market after graduation.

On-the-job training is also of value to an employer, who may hire the student after graduation, at a starting salary of 5-10 percent more. Many students become more motivated when they see the application of their coursework; others may decide to change majors and re-think while there's still time.

Co-oping, like anything else, has its disadvantages. Some students find the off-campus/on-campus rotations difficult, complaining that friendships suffer during their off-campus intervals. Job sites at distant locations challenge long distance relationships. Housing problems may also ensue when students require a place to live for only four months. Some students find it difficult to return to a "campus mode" after spending a semester involved with a job. And many co-op students who work and study without the vacation breaks that regular students enjoy wish they had more time to relax.

Yet, says Barbara Taylor, Director of the Cooperative Education Program at American University in Washington, D.C., "Co-oping makes sense. In many fields a B.A. is not enough. You need to document experience on a resume. Co-oping is a marvelous learning experience with many challenges."

USA



For More Information

National Commission for Cooperative Education

360 Huntington Avenue P.O., Box 878
 Boston, MA 02115
 (617) 437-3778

Ask for a free listing of colleges and universities offering co-op programs.

Cooperative Education in the United States and Canada

Available for \$7.50 from:
 Cooperative Education Research Center
 401 Stearns Center, Northeastern University
 360 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115

Earn & Learn—Cooperative Education Opportunities With the Federal Government

Joseph M. Re (\$3.75)

Don't Miss Out—The Ambitious Student's Guide to Financial Aid (\$6.25)

Both from Octameron Associates, Inc.
 P.O. Box 3437, Alexandria, VA 22302
 (703) 823-1882

The Best Buys in College Education

Edward B. Fiske, Times Books, New York.
 Revised annually.



Going co-op: Gaining an edge on the job market



On-the-job training: Making "real money"