



## **CO-OP PROGRAM INFORMATION PACKET**

### **1. Background**

The Cooperative Work/Education Program (Co-op) is a program that alternates periods of academic study with periods of “paid” work experience in the student’s field of study. The work experience is developed and approved by the University of New Haven as a suitable learning situation.

The Student participating in the Co-op experience will learn through observation and by participating in meaningful work for the sponsoring organization.

Throughout the experience, the college will monitor the student’s progress and the student’s performance on the job will be supervised and evaluated jointly by the college and by the sponsoring employer.

It is expected that the Co-op Program will involve a dedicated group of individuals, including multidisciplinary faculty, staff, and administrators who will be committed to the following:

- Leading and innovating in the discipline of Cooperative education
- Developing the curriculum and teaching methodologies to enhance the integration of classroom learning with practical work-related experiences
- Creating mutually beneficial partnerships with employers, the community, alumni, academic departments, and other universities and professional organizations.

### **2. Rationale for Co-op Program**

The development of a Co-op Program will provide numerous benefits to the students, the employers, and the University of New Haven .

#### *Benefits for the Students*

University of New Haven students will gain practical on-the-job experience and develop confidence, maturity and responsibility through the workplace experience. They will also gain career focus and acquire professional contacts for networking purposes. Students will also maintain full-time student benefits through the University including access to housing, meal plans, and other campus amenities while at the same time earning money to offset the expenses of college. This experience will be valuable for the student and will provide them with a

professional organization for contacts and networking upon graduation from the University of New Haven.

#### *Benefits for the Employer*

The implementation of the Co-op Program will also have benefits for the sponsoring organizations with which the University partners. A major benefit of participating in the program is competing for top college graduates through early identification, evaluation and preparing college students that are more readily productive upon their graduation.

Employers involved with this program should see improvements in their recruitment programs due to having a stronger presence on the University of New Haven campus. Employers may be more likely to hire students who accomplish valuable and necessary work for the organization during the Co-op. The participation of an organization in a Co-op program at the University of New Haven will create a lasting relationship for the future.

#### *Research to Support the Effectiveness of Co-op*

A study on the satisfaction of students involved in a cooperative education program was conducted at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. The findings matched up well with student's expectations of the program. Benefits that were listed by the students included the experience gained through the program and valuable decision-making about major career choices. Others listed included financial benefits and the educational benefit of a classroom supplement. Students also listed the reasons why they participated in the program, which included gaining professional experience, financial gain, resume building, future employment opportunities, and for the affirmation of their selected major.

Similarly, a study on the satisfaction of the employers that participated in the cooperative education program was conducted at Texas-Pan American Institute. It was found that most employers were satisfied with the students that participated in the Co-op Program and with their ability to apply knowledge, think logically and adapt to changes. They also ranked the most valuable attributes they believed students should have including, attendance, punctuality and dependability, self-motivation and self-discipline, interpersonal skills, and an understanding of professional ethics.

### **3. Expectations**

The following are expectations that the University would have of the student and the sponsoring organization involved in the Co-op Program:

### *Expectations for the Student*

The University of New Haven expects that students will get seriously involved in their work experience and have a desire to contribute to the organization with which they are employed. Students are expected to show a strong work ethic as demonstrated by arriving on time to work and putting in a full day's work. It is expected that the student will maintain professionalism, be enthusiastic, and be a team player while employed at this organization. Abuse of the privileges given by the organization will not be tolerated.

Before the students begin the Co-op, they will be responsible for signing the Co-op contract with their supervisors from the University of New Haven and the sponsor organization. It is attached to this document.

### *Learning Objectives*

By the end of the Co-op Program, the student is expected to:

- Be able to practice proper workplace behavior in a professional environment.
- Indicate specific examples of real life ethical dilemmas of the workplace.
- Be able to interpret a potential problem in their field and utilize their experience or knowledge to select an appropriate solution.
- Be able to analyze and summarize the multiple workplace procedures within their department.
- Be able to form their own affirmation on the field of study they have chosen.

### *Minimum Requirements*

To participate in this Co-op Program, the student is expected to meet multiple minimum requirements:

- Have maintained a GPA of at least 3.0.
- Provide one letter of recommendation from the University faculty.
- Receive a passing grade from the Pre-Internship Class (CJ4500A)
- Satisfactorily complete the required application and interview process.

### *Expectations of the Employer*

The University of New Haven expects that sponsoring organizations provide students with work assignments that directly relate to the student's academic program and career aspirations and pay a wage that is reasonable, fair, and proportional with the skill level associated with this position. It is also expected that the organization work collaboratively with the university to develop a mutually agreeable plan for the student's co-op experience and to provide supervision for the student during this work experience and submit timely evaluations as required.

It is expected that organizations will consider students on an equal opportunity basis and that they will commit to continuing a student's employment through the duration of the co-op consisting of a semester-long plan for the student. The university expects that the organization will support the co-op program requirements and that, during the work term, the student will be considered an employee subject to the policies and laws that relate to other employees of the organization.

#### **4. The Co-op Contract**

When a co-op site has been finalized, a contract needs to be developed between the University of New Haven and the sponsoring organization. The contract specifies that the student will agree to perform specific tasks or accomplish specific goals while the sponsoring organization agrees to provide assistance for the students in their efforts to reach their Co-op expectations. A sample Co-op contract is part of this packet. This contract is signed by the student, site supervisor and the University of New Haven Co-op Supervisor. The contract serves as the basis for all issues with the Co-op and students may not begin to work until the contract has been fully executed.

For example, if the contract requires the student to work 35 hours a week and the student only works 10 hours per week without an acceptable reason, then the student is technically violating the Co-op contract. Similarly, if the Co-op site is required to help train the student in a particular discipline and the student is only given photocopying work, then the Co-op contract will allow the student to leave the Co-op site based on the site's breach of the contract.

Students are required to behave in a manner that reflects unquestionable professionalism. It is incumbent on the student and to a lesser extent on the Co-op site to maintain contact with the Co-op University of New Haven supervisor or department coordinator and report on a regular basis. Every effort will be made by the Co-op University of New Haven supervisor or department coordinator to visit the Co-op site or meet with the student and host in another specified location or manner to determine progress. Phone/Internet communication can also be used to communicate with site supervisors and students. Besides such updates, the student is required to complete a weekly log highlighting what they have accomplished the past week.

Some topics to keep record of can be, but are not limited to the following:

- Weekly progress toward Co-op goals
- Special Projects assigned by the sponsor organization.
- Ethical issues the student employee may face in the department.
- Positive or negative experiences in the Co-op program.

The purpose of this weekly record is to remind the students of their own experience within the program. This record should be detailed and shared with the Co-op University of New Haven supervisor during their monthly meetings. At the end of the Co-op Program, the student may be required to participate in the Post Co-op course offered by the University of New Haven to help the student reflect the Co-op experience. The Co-op site will formally evaluate the student and their experience.

In addition, Co-op students will be required to participate in regularly scheduled Co-op mentoring sessions where they will be provided with opportunities to discuss and reflect upon their personal and professional development.

## **5. Co-op Assessment**

Prior to the beginning of the student's co-op experience, the student and the employer will carefully decide on three goals/objectives that the employer wants to see from the student and that the student wants to derive from their work experience.

Upon completion of the co-op experience, the student and employer will both evaluate the other party. The student will say what they liked and disliked about their co-op as well as the various ways in which the coop enriched their college experience. The employer will be given different aspects to rate the student on and this will be used to evaluate the student's overall performance through their time on co-op.