Frequently Asked Questions about Co-op

What is cooperative education?
Traditionally, co-op is the practice of alternating a student’s studies with paid professional work related to their major. Co-op was invented at the University of Cincinnati in 1906.

How do I qualify to do a co-op?
Co-op is open to juniors, seniors and graduate students who meet the minimum GPA requirement as set by their major department. Co-op is an internship with duties that directly relate to the student’s major.

Why should I do a co-op or internship?
Participating in a co-op has many advantages:
- Gain first hand industry knowledge you won’t learn anywhere else.
- Increase your professional self-confidence
- Build your resume and network of contacts
- Enhance your ability to get hired after graduation
- Earn money while gaining college credit

Can I get hired even if I don’t have related job experience?
Yes. Though many employers want to see previous internship experience, some will hire you on the basis of your course work, your potential to learn, and your involvement in activities outside of school. Many employers use their internship and co-op programs as the “farm team” for entry-level jobs. They are motivated to recruit and build loyalty early.

What do employers look for?
In addition to your technical coursework, employers want to see that a student has learned the “soft skills” necessary to succeed in the workplace. Soft skills are developed outside the classroom in extracurricular activities such as social clubs, sports teams, student chapters of professional groups, service organizations and through related and non-related work experience.

What are “soft skills”?
Teamwork, leadership ability, communication skills, problem-solving ability, “coachability”, and follow-through are a few examples.

What if I have a low GPA?
It depends on the employer. Mike Shepelak, director of human resources at S.W.I.F.T., a company that hires technical graduates, says “If I’m looking at two people side by side, I’ll look to see if the person worked to earn part of his or her tuition and if the candidates participated in club activities...We want the well-rounded person, not the person who was [in college] just to get the grades.”*

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