This Handbook was written specifically to aid employers in creating a successful Cooperative Education program that serves the needs of their organizations, the students and the University in a collaborative fashion.
What is Cooperative Education?

Cooperative Education is a University-wide, credit-bearing, experience-based learning program that provides you with preparation, counseling, academic projects and the opportunity to reflect on what is learned. It’s a great resume builder and a way to test out a career.

An effective Co-op program allows:

• Employers to partner with colleges and universities for their short term and long term hiring needs.
• Students to be immersed in an experiential learning environment.
• Students and mentors to collaborate on real world problems in a discipline specific environment.

Cooperative Education aims to help students:

• Apply, integrate and evaluate a body of knowledge and methods of inquiry of an academic discipline;
• Develop skills and competencies needed for after graduation employment or entry into graduate school;
• Improve the ability to learn in a self-directed manner; and
• Foster personal growth and maturation.

As an employer, you know that you need employees who can communicate, reason, solve problems and continue to learn in response to evolving economic, social and political circumstances. Employers also expect graduates to understand the workplace environment and to be capable of work-
Why become a Cooperative Education employer?

*Advantages of Becoming a Co-op Employer:*

- When you hire a co-op student you will take an active role in creating the kind of workforce you want.
- Some employers view co-op as a resource for personnel needed to meet special project needs, peak season or part-time staffing requirements.
- Cooperative Education provides access to students who show initiative and motivation, who can contribute new ideas and knowledge of technologies from the classroom.
- Co-op interns are more likely to possess greater problem solving abilities, technical knowledge, and an understanding of business needs, as a result of their work experience(s).
- Your image in the community will be enhanced via your affiliation with the University.
How does the Cooperative Education program work?

• Once hired, a student works as your organization's employee. The student receives academic credit from the University and work experience from you, the employer. When the agreed time period ends, the student returns to school and another student may fill the position.
• Students with a qualifying GPA are eligible for a Co-op after completing 30 credits; however, some academic departments may have additional requirements.
• The Career Services Directors prepare students to enter the workplace through advising and workshops. Students are screened, resumes are forwarded, and the employer arranges interviews with selected students. The employer makes the hiring decisions.
• The Center assigns each student to a Co-op Faculty Advisor who is responsible for the academic aspect of the co-op course, as well as for making visits to the worksite. While there, they meet with the student and talk to the work supervisor to learn how the student is performing on the job.
• The Co-op Faculty Advisor is responsible for grading the student at the close of the work experience based on site observations, the quality of academic projects completed and the work supervisor's written evaluations (midway and final) and verbal comments.
Policies and Procedures for Prospective Co-op Employers

Launching the Co-op Initiative

- Give careful consideration to who will supervise each Co-op Intern. It is important that the supervisors you select are enthusiastic about the role and willing to become mentors. These supervisors should become familiar with the Co-op program.
- Provide orientation for your staff so they understand their responsibilities regarding the Co-op Intern.
- Decide what your needs are for either a full-time or part-time (requires a minimum of 20 hours per week) Co-op student. Keep in mind that students are required by Montclair State University to work for at least one entire semester (15 weeks).
- Provide guidelines for quality assignments, written job description and Co-op Intern guidelines.
- Establish pay rates, work schedules and job responsibilities for each Co-op Intern position. Allocate sufficient funds for a whole year. This will prevent budgetary obstacles from derailing this co-op/internship initiative and ease the transition between ensuing students who will fill the same position.
- Articulate company policies that will apply to Co-op Interns. Consider areas such as sick days, holiday pay, grievance procedures, conflict resolution, responsible computing and other topics. Provide an orientation for the Co-op Intern.
Policies and Procedures for Prospective Co-op Employers Continued:

***It is highly recommended that students receive a wage for their work as interns. Please note that Under the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) that “for-profit”, public sector employers:

The following six criteria must be applied when making the determination to offer pay for the internship:

1. The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;
2. The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;
3. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;
4. The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;
5. The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
6. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

If all of the factors listed above are met, the intern will not be considered an “employee” of the company, therefore it is not necessary to provide a wage, although it can be beneficial to the company in many ways.

Often, employers are not aware of the fact that students must pay for credits received for completing an internship. In addition, there are expenses associated with travel to internship sites and, in some cases, meals. It is always preferred that a student be paid to offset some of these costs incurred to them.
Policies and Procedures for Prospective Co-op Employers Continued:

**Hiring a Co-op Intern**

- Create a job description that includes the background, skills and aptitudes the successful candidate should possess. Establish the criteria used to screen prospective Co-op Interns.
- Students are available for work-based academic experiences that begin in September, January and May. The Directors of Career Services in each college/school at Montclair State can help you develop a time-line so that pre-screening, interviews, selection and preparation can be successfully completed by the target date.
- Review resume referrals and arrange interviews at your site with students who meet your basic screening criteria. The Directors of Career Services will review the resume, and only those students who meet your criteria are referred for consideration.
- Interview students who meet your basic screening criteria.
- Once you've decided to hire a particular student, extend the offer to the student and inform the Director of Career Services when the student accepts the position. After your offer has been made and accepted, the student has on-campus paperwork and course enrollment to complete, so it's important you notify us as soon as your decision is firm.
Responsibilities of a Co-op Work Site Supervisor

The Co-op Work Site Supervisor is required to:

• Sign the student's Learning Agreement,
• Supervise and act as a mentor to the student,
• Meet once or twice a semester (at your site) with the student's Co-op Faculty Advisor,
• Provide two written assessments of the Co-op Intern’s progress: The Midway and Final Evaluation Forms
• Complete the Intern Exit interview

If your organization has a Personnel or Human Resources department, make sure to inform them as soon as you've hired the Co-op intern. The Human Resources and Payroll offices, along with anyone else involved in record keeping should be familiar with Co-op/ internships and the company policies you've decided will apply to Co-op Interns.

Orienting the Student to the World of Work

Some of the areas that the Co-op Intern will be adjusting to include:
• Adjusting to work routines and deadlines
• Organizational culture
• Planning and time management
• Communication (non-verbal, verbal, written)
• Communication direct (in-person) vs. indirect (email, text)
• Accountability and responsibility
• Self-assessment

What to Address during the Co-op Intern’s Orientation

Work Site Policies
• Company/department – history, organization, culture policies and standards
• The city/community – housing, transportation, things to do
• The job – objectives, training, expectations, performance

Social Integration
• Formal introduction to co-workers
• Group norms and practices
Responsibilities of a Co-op Work Site Supervisor
Continued:

Provide Support
• Identify role within the organization
• Review individual goals and objectives
• Review conflict resolution

Provide opportunities to
• Allow individual contributions
• Allow mentoring and shadowing
• Be appreciated

Simulate growth by
• Presenting challenges
• Progressively adding responsibility
• Providing feedback
• Encouraging independent thought

Training
The specific areas of training are dependent upon the job and the educational background of the student. Listed below are three general categories of training:

1. Technical training. This pertains to the specific, job related tasks that are to be performed. Examples are computer design skills, accounting practices and regulatory or safety considerations.

2. Process training. No matter what the particular skills are, there are generally specific ways or methods a company may desire to perform a specific task. Examples include planning, decision-making, problem solving, research and investigation, and conceptualization.

3. Personal development training. This area includes the interpersonal skills needed to effectively work in a group such as communication, self-assessment, developing self-confidence, time management, and interpersonal relations.
Mentoring
Mentoring is a training methodology that is done on an ongoing basis, one-on-one with the student. A mentor is able to draw upon their past experiences to transfer key points of knowledge to the student. Some factors necessary for effective mentoring:

- Understand the student’s individual needs, goals, plans and self-assessment.
- Promote a positive outlook of the upcoming term, tempered with realistic attainable expectations.
- Share own knowledge and experience to assist the student in key areas.
- Listen to the student’s words and observe their actions.
- Help the student self-assess.
- Confront poor performance with specific feedback and changes needed.
- **Evaluation** of student performance is essential for a successful co-op program.
Responsibilities of a Co-op Work Site Supervisor

Continued:

Feedback

Informal Feedback

The more causal the feedback, the less students tend to recognize it as feedback. The Work Site Supervisor and/or other colleagues may offer some informal feedback or advice. Always be clear with your intent; the more direct, the more likely the student will perceive this to be an area of focus. Positive feedback should be given freely. Areas of growth should be presented in a private setting where the student is not embarrassed.

Formal Feedback

Formal feedback should be prepared and delivered in a private meeting with the Co-op work site supervisor to discuss student’s strengths and areas for growth. It should be designed so the manager achieves his desired objective. For example: What do you want to tell this student and why? Present positive feedback first, then discuss areas for growth. End the discussion with positive reinforcement. Students should have clear objectives of what areas for growth need to be addressed. Use specific examples of student behavior whenever possible so students have clear idea of what areas need improvement.

Mid-Term Feedback

A mid-term evaluation session gives the student opportunity for improvement in any areas that need immediate attention. The Work Site Supervisor is required to complete a Midway Evaluation form, which will inform the Co-op Faculty Advisor of the student’s progress and impact the grading process.

End of Term Feedback

The Work Site Supervisor is also required to complete a Final Evaluation form. This report should reflect actual student performance. This report will be shared with the Coop Faculty advisor and impact the student’s final grade. If the student is not doing well the ratings should match the student performance. Students need to hear and understand what the supervisor perceives to be their strengths and areas for growth. Fair, firm and consistent evaluation is essential. This feedback is integral to a student’s professional growth.
Guidelines for Off Campus Employers

The Center expects that all employers who recruit on-campus, or through our web-based services, will subscribe to the following principles of professional conduct from the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

- Employment professionals will refrain from any practice that improperly influences and affects job acceptances. Such practices may include undue time pressure for acceptance of employment offers and encouragement of revocation of another employment offer.
- Employment professionals will strive to communicate decisions to candidates within the agreed-upon time frame.
- Employment professionals will know the recruitment and career development field as well as the industry and the employing organization that they represent, and work within a framework of professionally accepted recruiting, interviewing, and selection techniques.
- Employment professionals will supply accurate information on their organization and employment opportunities.
- Employing organizations are responsible for information supplied and commitments made by their representatives. If conditions change and require the employing organization to revoke its commitment, the employing organization will pursue a course of action for the affected candidate that is fair and equitable.
- Neither employment professionals nor their organizations will expect, or seek to extract, special favors or treatment which would influence the recruitment process as a result of support, or the level of support, to the educational institution or career services office in the form of contributed services, gifts, or other financial support.
- Serving alcohol should not be part of the recruitment process on or off campus. This includes receptions, dinners, company tours, etc.
Guidelines for Off Campus Employers
Continued:

- Employment professionals will maintain equal employment opportunity (EEO) compliance and follow affirmative action principles in recruiting activities in a manner that includes the following: Recruiting, interviewing, and hiring individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disability, and providing reasonable accommodations upon request; Reviewing selection criteria for adverse impact based upon the student's race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disability; Avoiding use of inquiries that are considered unacceptable by EEO standards during the recruiting process; Developing a sensitivity to, and awareness of, cultural differences and the diversity of the workforce; Informing campus constituencies of special activities that have been developed to achieve the employer's affirmative action goals; Investigating complaints forwarded by the career services office regarding EEO noncompliance and seeking resolution of such complaints.
- Employment professionals will maintain the confidentiality of student information, regardless of the source, including personal knowledge, written records/reports, and computer databases.
- There will be no disclosure of student information to another organization without the prior written consent of the student, unless necessitated by health and/or safety considerations.
- Those engaged in administering, evaluating, and interpreting assessment tools, tests, and technology used in selection would be trained and qualified to do so.
- Employment professionals must advise the career services office of any test conducted on campus and eliminate such a test if it violates campus policies.
- Employment professionals must advise students in a timely fashion of the type and purpose of any test that students will be required to take as part of the recruitment process and to whom the test results will be disclosed. All tests will be reviewed by the employing organization for disparate impact and jobrelatedness.
Guidelines for Off Campus Employers

Continued:

- When using organizations that provide recruiting services for a fee, employment professionals will respond to inquiries by the career services office regarding this relationship and the positions the organization was contracted to fill. This principle applies equally to any other form of recruiting that is used as a substitute for the traditional employer/student interaction.
- When employment professionals conduct recruitment activities through student associations or academic departments, such activities will be conducted in accordance with the policies of the career services office.
- Employment professionals will cooperate with the policies and procedures of the career services office, including certification of EEO compliance or exempt status under the Immigration Reform and Control Act, and will honor scheduling arrangements and recruitment commitments.
- Employment professionals recruiting for international operations will do so according to EEO standards. Employment professionals will advise the career services office and students of the realities of working in that country and of any cultural or foreign law differences.
- Employment professionals will educate and encourage acceptance of these principles throughout their employing institution and by third parties representing their employing organization on campus, and will respond to reports of noncompliance.