

EMPLOYER HANDBOOK

The Office of Cooperative Education

VALDOSTA



UNIVERSITY

229-333-7172

www.valdosta.edu/coop

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MISSION STATEMENT AND GOALS

The mission of the Valdosta State University Office of Cooperative Education is to support the academic, career, personal, and work-skills development of VSU students through structured work-based learning experiences.

GOALS

The following strategic goals are integral to the mission of the Co-op Program:

1. Maximize student development
2. Enhance the employer network
3. Achieve superior unit planning and administration
4. Nurture dynamic partnerships

HISTORY OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

In 1906, the first Cooperative Education Program in the United States started at the University of Cincinnati. Dr. Herman Schneider, a visionary engineering professor, realized that his students' education was incomplete without the element of practical experience. Dr. Schneider made arrangements with 13 local employers to hire 27 students on an alternating work schedule. The cooperative education program or "Co-op" was an immediate and resounding success and often labeled as the Cincinnati Plan. Within the next few years, the co-op program expanded to about one-third of the post-secondary education institutions in the United States. In recent years, the Co-op concept has spread to virtually all academic disciplines. Students find that Co-op employment allows them to gain skills and experience which give them a competitive edge after graduation.

The Valdosta State Cooperative Education Program began in 1984, when a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education was obtained. During the course of the grant, the institution's share of the total expenses increased annually, to a point that Valdosta State assumed total fiscal responsibility for the program.

The Cooperative Education Program was a welcome addition to the services offered to Valdosta State students, giving them an opportunity to develop job skills and have experiential learning opportunities while working on their undergraduate degree.

WHAT IS COOPERATIVE EDUCATION (CO-OP)?

Cooperative Education (Co-op) is an academic program that offers students an experience-based learning opportunity to explore or confirm career interests and plans, apply classroom learning to real world situations, and practice or strengthen interpersonal and technical skills.

Through on-the-job experience, a student may earn college credits, test their interest and suitability for an occupation, be exposed to work methods not taught in the classroom and have access to technology that may not be available in the college laboratory. It also improves the ability for students to make the transition from school to work following completion of a degree or certificate program. This work experience must be paid.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All Co-op students must take a Co-op course with each work semester. The Co-op courses enable students to gain full benefit from the Co-op program. The courses provide the knowledge needed to become successful in building a career. Students must choose either credit or non-credit courses to meet their individual needs. Students will develop a career plan, a professional resume and learn to network within their field of study or career interest.

Students who intend to graduate from VSU or who participate in a recognized transfer program are eligible to participate in Co-op. Students must obtain 30 hours (sophomore status) before being placed in a Co-op position. Students must maintain a minimum semester and cumulative GPA of 2.0. Students in Academic "Good Standing" may be admitted to the Co-op program.

BENEFIT OPPORTUNITIES

There are over 50 majors represented in the VSU Co-op Program, including Accounting, Art, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Information Systems, Computer Science, Journalism, Mass Media, Nursing, Education, Finance, Management, Marketing, Math, Music, Pre-Engineering, Political Science, Psychology, Public Relations, Sociology, and Social Work.

Co-op offers employers options not found through traditional recruitment efforts:

- A "recruitment pool" of knowledgeable, highly qualified individuals who perform their jobs with enthusiasm and professionalism;
- The opportunity to evaluate the potential of Co-op students for permanent employment; improved cost/benefits in recruitment and training;
- The flexibility to free permanent employees for higher level work by assigning Co-op students to pre-professional tasks;
- Continual contact with the University and access to other programs and recruitment opportunities.

EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

Co-op:

- **Alternating Co-op:** Students work full-time, alternating semesters. This also includes placements that last through one semester and its contiguous summer term (serves as one semester). Alternating co-ops are typically 40-hour work weeks. The student must return to school full time the semester following the co-op.
 - **Parallel Co-ops:** Students work 10-20 hours per week while taking a minimum of 6 hours each semester of regular credit-bearing classes at VSU.
-

Internship:

- **Full-Time Internship:** Students work 30-40 hours per week for one semester.
- **Part-time Internship:** Students work 10-20 hours per week while attending VSU a minimum of half-time for up to two semesters.

REQUIREMENT FOR GETTING STARTED

To recruit Valdosta State University students for Co-op positions in your organization, please review the following steps:

1. Contact the Co-op office to express your interest in considering candidates for Co-op.
2. Complete and sign the Co-op Job Order Form and Employer Work Agreement

3. Send printed literature and any relevant information that students can use for researching your organization.
4. Receive resumes from our office through College Central Network (CCN); review resumes of qualified students, select candidates for interview, and reserve an interview date and place on our campus, at your site, or by telephone.
5. Extend offers (via an offer letter and/or by phone) and notifying the co-op office of acceptances.
6. Inform the Co-op office of any problems, changes to the work schedule, or other issues that might affect the organization's ability to maintain the program.

Requirement for Employer participation:

- Employers must be able to sustain a co-op position related to the student's major field of study with assignments that are progressively more challenging and carry greater responsibility over the duration of the twelve to eighteen months of the student's Co-op schedule.
- Collaborate with the Co-op student on three short term learning objectives per semester. The learning objectives must illustrate progression for the Co-op student.
 - **"How to Write Learning Objectives"** Learning Objectives are short term goals related to the students major for each participating semester. The student, work- sight supervisor, Faculty Advisor and Coop Coordinator will sign and date the Student Learning Objective Form. The students' work-site supervisor will assess the students work skills outlined in the Learning Objectives. Once all signatures are received the student will return the Learning Objectives to the Cooperative Education Office. See *Learning Objective Form on page 13*.
 - **All Learning Objectives are due to the Cooperative Education Office no Later than 2 weeks after placement**
 - **Writing measureable Learning Objectives**
 - ✓ Develop and write comprehensive objectives at the beginning of each new placement.
 - ✓ Review your job descriptions
 - ✓ Identify areas students can gain skills, increase knowledge or improve attitudes
 - ✓ Avoid broad general statements

- ✓ Objectives should be limited to ability to complete in one semester if the student is working in a internship work option for one semester or they can be **ongoing** if the student is working in a co-op work option
- ✓ Break up large projects into a start, middle and finish stage based on the number of hours or type of placement
- ✓ Learning objectives should have:

Activity	Recommendation	Time Frame	Action Word	Examples of Action Words
Desired outcome or expected achievement	Proposed level of accomplishment	Expected Completion Date	Needs to lead to measurable outcomes	Demonstrate, Describe, Develop, Draw, Discuss, Operate, Performs, etc.

- Each student must have clearly defined job responsibilities for each work term, and must be evaluated by the supervisor according to those responsibilities at the end of each work term. The person completing the evaluation is to discuss the evaluation with the student and use it as a tool for the student’s learning experience.(See Employer Evaluation Form on page 15)
- The student’s progress (or lack of progress) is to be communicated to the Co-op office at Valdosta State University timely (Mid-Term) so that the issues can be addressed through the advising process.
- No student is to be asked to sign a NON-COMPETE agreement at any time during his/her cooperative education schedule.
- Employers must comply with Valdosta State University’s policy of non-discrimination: *“It is the policy of Valdosta State University not to discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status.”*

Cooperative Education Program Provides:

- Student applicants who have been screened and advised by the Co-op Coordinators.

- Resumes of interested students.
- Committed students interested in professional work experience.
- Monitored progress of student during work assignment.
 - During Mid-Terms the Cooperative Education Office will contact students to schedule Site Visits.
 - Site Visits allow our office to review the success of the placement
 - Determine if the employer needs are being met as well as discuss additional employment (internship or co-op) positions are needed for future semesters.

Student Will:

- Collaborate with the employer on three short term learning objectives per semester.
- Perform professional work commensurate with level of classes completed.
- Earn the right to work subsequent terms based on performance.
- Return for work each term scheduled unless the employer cannot re-hire the student based on economic conditions or unsatisfactory performance.
- Follow company policies as outlined for the student such as safety, health, security, dress and non-disclosure of confidential/proprietary information.
- Provide housing and reliable transportation unless employer offers accommodations.
- Maintain a Good Academic Standing with the University. If a student does not maintain good academic standing he or she can be placed on Co-op Program Probation. Continuing poor academic performance will result in the student being dropped from the VSU Co-op program.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

WHEN A STUDENT IS DISSATISFIED WITH A CO-OP ASSIGNMENT

Students occasionally express dissatisfaction with the co-op assignment, an issue that is unlikely to arise if the student has been given a realistic picture of the type of work and responsibilities inherent in the job and if an appropriate plan is in place to allow the student to increase responsibilities when feasible. Asking students to evaluate their work assignments will give you valuable feedback for future improvements. Even under the best of circumstances, a poor match may cause difficulties for both the student and the employer. In such a case, consider the following:

- Can steps be taken to more closely align assignments with the student's major and skills?
- Can the student be moved to another department?
- Has the supervisor developed a plan for increasing the student's responsibilities?
- Is a mentor helping the student to adjust to the work environment?
- Is a strong structure in place for co-op students?

If issues are not resolved after repeated efforts, you may decide to ask the student not to return for future work terms. In this event, please notify the student and the Co-op Program of your decision in writing as soon as possible.

WHEN YOU MUST TERMINATE A STUDENT

On rare occasions, a student must be terminated due to unethical conduct, behavioral issues, or other reasons. The Co-op Program suggests that you first counsel students on correcting inappropriate behavior and provide frequent feedback throughout the work term. If termination is the only acceptable course of action, please notify the student, follow up in writing, and send the Co-op Program a copy of the termination letter. Our office will also need a copy of the student's final written evaluation.

WHEN A STUDENT IS DOWNSIZED

Keep in mind that co-op is a long-term training and development program, not a method for temporarily filling workforce needs. Downsizing a co-op may have a negative effect on your ability to recruit co-ops in the future. The Co-op Program encourages you to maintain co-ops during down times, if at all possible. Co-ops are a relatively inexpensive source of talent. Intelligent, creative, and flexible co-ops are able to take on a wide variety of tasks. If you must downsize a co-op, please wait until the end of the work term to do so. Please notify both the student and the Co-op Program in writing that you will not have the student return for future work terms.

WHEN ACADEMIC PROBLEMS ARISE

VSU's Cooperative Education Program requires students to meet certain academic standards in order to enter and maintain their membership in the program. If students fail a course or earn below a 2.00 GPA during the semester prior to the first work term, they are ineligible to co-op. In the event this situation occurs with a student you have selected, a coordinator will contact you immediately after semester grades are posted to discuss available alternatives. Students who have completed one or more work terms may also be dropped from the Co-op Program for failing to meet the program's academic standards after one Co-op probation semester. A coordinator will notify you if this situation arises. Students who are dropped from the Co-op Program may seek readmission upon making satisfactory academic progress.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE AND HEALTH INSURANCE

Unemployment Insurance - VSU considers each Cooperative Education placement as a semester-long class. It is a learning relationship and not a business or consulting contract. Therefore, the end of each semester's Co-op or Internship is not considered a lay-off or employment termination and cannot be the basis of an unemployment insurance claim (*Georgia Code 34-8-35 n11*).

Student Health Insurance - Under co-op, a student retains his or her status as a full-time VSU student, even if the student is not taking other for-credit academic classes during the co-op work-phase semester. This entitles the student to maintain student insurance, Financial Aid, HOPE scholarship and student loan payment deferment. A student who is on a co-op placement is responsible for purchasing and maintaining his or her own health insurance through the company or otherwise.

Tax Benefits - There are no direct federal tax benefits to an employer of cooperative education students. Salaries paid to co-op students are not considered fellowships or scholarships for tax purposes. A co-op position is recorded on the student's transcript like any other academic course, and it is taken for academic credit (**A-F**) or no credit (**Satisfactory** or **Unsatisfactory**).

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE EDUCATION STUDENTS

Commencement of co-ops within the United States for international students is contingent on the approval of the VSU Center of International Programs. The following outlines the policies and procedures pertaining to cooperative education for international students.

F-1 Visa: International Students on an F-1 Visa are eligible to participate in Cooperative Education provided they meet the criteria for Curricular Practical Training and have obtained approval from the VSU Center of International Programs (CIP) at (229) 333-7410.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service defines Curricular Practical Training (CPT) as employment which is an integral or important part of the curriculum. Cooperative education meets the definition of CPT. To be eligible for CPT, the work must be related to a student's degree program and the student must meet the following criteria:

1. Be in lawful F-1 status.

2. Have completed nine months of full-time study (One academic year/two semesters).
3. Maintain full-time enrollment status.
4. Obtain an approval form and job description for the Cooperative Education office.

J-1 Visa: International students on a J-1 Visa must speak to an advisor at CIP about options to participate in Cooperative Education.

SUMMARY

The success of the Valdosta State University Co-op and Internship Programs are dependent upon all partners in the co-op relationship working together and adhering to standard guidelines. This Guide for Employers was prepared to outline those guidelines which are necessary for an effective and efficient Co-op Program. All forms, evaluations and agreements can be found online at www.valdosta.edu/coop/forms.shtml. Our staff welcomes any comments or questions that you may have about VSU's Co-op Program. We look forward to partnering with your company or agency.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Valdosta State University

The Office of Cooperative Education
1500 North Patterson Street, Powell Hall West

Valdosta, GA 31698

Phone: 229-333-7172

Fax: 229-245-3881

Email: coop@valdosta.edu

Website: www.valdosta.edu/coop/

FORMS SECTION



Valdosta State University

Cooperative Education

LOCATION Powell Hall — West • Room 1100 • **ADDRESS** 1500 N. Patterson St. • Valdosta, GA 31698-0169

PHONE 229.333.7172 • **FAX** 229.245.3881 • **WEB** www.valdosta.edu/coop/ • **E-MAIL** coop@valdosta.edu

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CO-OP & INTERNSHIP EMPLOYER WORK AGREEMENT

EMPLOYER COMMITMENT

1. Provide Co-op positions related to the student's major or career goals that afford a varied and progressive work experience.
2. Supply a written job description.
3. Pay the Co-op student a reasonable market-based wage. Internships can be paid or unpaid.
4. Support VSU in enforcing academic performance standards.
5. Allow periodic on-site visits by VSU Co-op staff.
6. Co-op positions should last for at least 2 work semesters, Internships for 1 to 2 semesters.
7. Assign a supervisor who is aware of the Co-op program's purpose and is willing to give the student the necessary supervision to make the work assignment successful.
8. Complete and review a written evaluation for the student each semester.
9. Inform the Co-op Office of events such as termination, expanded hours, job description or change in assigned work departments.
10. Give the co-op office reasonable time to refer candidates for positions listed.
11. Afford all applicants equal consideration for hiring regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion or veteran status.
12. Agree to comply with federal and state laws, rules and regulations, and employee policies relative to employment.
13. Agree to engage in practices conducive to the overall safety of the co-op and/or intern.
14. Do you supply Workers Compensation insurance for students in case of injury on the job? Yes__ No__

You may contact our office by **Phone:** (229) 333-7172; FAX: (229) 245-3881, or

Mailing Address: 1500 N. Patterson St., Room 1100 Powell Hall West,
Valdosta, GA 31698-0169

www.valdosta.edu/coop

Employer Representative & Company Name

Date

VSU Co-op Representative

Date

***If you have a position you would like to list with us, please complete the information on the following page.**



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VSU CO-OP EMPLOYER JOB ORDER FORM

Company: Address:

Contact Person: Title:

Telephone: Fax:

E-Mail: URL:

JOB INFORMATION

Position Title: Rate of Pay: Start Date:

Work Address: Number of Positions available:

Job Description (You may attach an existing form if one is available)

Skills and experience required for the position (please be as specific as possible):

College of Business: Accounting; Economics; Finance; Management; Marketing

College of Arts and Sciences: Biology; Chemistry; Criminal Justice; Computer Science; Computer Information Systems; Geo-Sciences; Sociology; Pre- Engineering; Political Science

College of the Arts: Art; Art Ed.; Interior Design; Speech Communication; Mass Media; Theater; Dance

College of Education: Early Childhood Ed.; Middle Grades; Secondary Ed.; Exercise Physiology; PE; Sports Medicine; Psychology; Special Ed. & Communication Disorders

Minimum GPA: Sophomore; Junior; Senior; Graduate

Please select the Co-op Work Schedule(s) which best meets your needs:

- Alternating Semester Co-ops, full-time work for at least two semesters, separated by one school semester.
Full-time Internship, 40 hours per week, one semester and up to two semesters consecutively only once
Part-time Internship, 10-20 hours per week up to two semesters.
Parallel Co-ops (part-time), 10-20 hours/week, minimum of two semesters

Please return a form for each position to: VSU Co-op Office, Room 1100 Powell Hall – West, Valdosta, GA 31698 or Fax: (229) 245-3881- Phone: (229) 333-7172



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STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE FORM

Student _____ Position _____

Major _____ Semester / Year _____ Grad Date _____

Company _____ City/ State _____

Supervisor _____ Position _____

Phone Number _____ Email _____ Fax _____

Academic Advisor _____

List your three (3) Learning Objectives for this semester only.

Learning Objective #1:

Learning Objective #2:

Learning Objective #3:

Employer Signature _____ Date _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Academic Advisor Signature _____ Date _____

Co-op Coordinator _____ Date _____

Co-op Instructor _____ Date _____

Job Types Parallel _____ Alternating _____ Part-Time Intern _____ Full-Time Intern _____

Projected Work Schedule

YEAR	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL



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EMPLOYER’S EVALUATION

Instructions: Evaluation form should be completed by student’s immediate supervisor. Evaluation is used to facilitate the student’s professional growth. Please provide as much information as possible and review this with the student.

Student _____ **Position** _____ **Semester / Year** _____

Company _____

Supervisor _____ **Supervisor’s Position** _____

Phone Number _____ **Email** _____ **Fax** _____

Learning Objectives	Quality of Work
I = successfully met learning objective	1= Excellent
2=met learning objective	2=Good
3 = made some progress toward meeting learning objective	3=Average
4 = made little progress toward meeting learning objective	4=Marginal
5 = did not make progress toward meeting learning objective	5= Needs Improvement

	1	2	3	4	5
Learning Objective #1	()	()	()	()	()
Quality of Work	()	()	()	()	()
Learning Objective #2	()	()	()	()	()
Quality of Work	()	()	()	()	()
Learning Objective #3	()	()	()	()	()
Quality of Work	()	()	()	()	()

