

**SUNY/WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION/INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

CAREER & TRANSFER CENTER

STC 201

(914) 606-6760

WWW.SUNYWCC.EDU/CTCENTER

Dear WCC Student:

Congratulations on your interest in the Cooperative Education/Internship Program at Westchester Community College. You are about to embark on a unique, exciting and challenging educational opportunity; one that blends classroom theory with practical, supervised work experiences. This handbook is designed to provide you with the **information you will need to enroll in the program and to guide you through the process of securing a position.**

Since its beginning in 1994, the Westchester Community College Cooperative Education/Internship Program has assisted hundreds of students with their professional career development. By participating in experiential learning programs like this students gain excellent experience which helps to prepare them for their future career goals. The business community receives qualified, pre-trained, motivated employees.

As our ambassadors, Co-op/Internship students represent Westchester Community College in the wider community. We are grateful to the business and industrial community for their continued participation in this Program and for their confidence in our students.

The benefits you will receive from this program are directly related to the effort you put into it. **We will assist you in acquiring challenging work assignments in your field of study, but your ultimate success will depend on your own initiative and perseverance.**

We believe you made a great choice in deciding to participate in this program, and we look forward to working with you to achieve your career objectives.

So let's get started!

Susan Hacker
Associate Professor/Counselor
Coordinator, Cooperative Education & Internship Program
Career & Transfer Center

WHAT IS THE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION/INTERNSHIP PROGRAM?

The Cooperative Education/Internship Program at Westchester Community College is an experiential learning program that provides opportunities for students to gain career related work experiences, while completing a degree. The program is designed to complement an academic program and enhance personal growth through the practical application of theoretical and technical knowledge and skills gained in the classroom.

Since 1994, students at Westchester Community College have had the opportunity to work in career related positions in corporations, small to mid-sized businesses, museums, schools, non-profit organizations and municipalities. The Cooperative Education/Internship Program bridges the gap between theory and practice and prepares students for success in the profession of their choice. Students get a head start in making professional contacts while strengthening their resume for future employment opportunities.

The Westchester Community College Cooperative Education/Internship Program is considered both an academic program and a career planning tool. Through this program, students learn about the variety of possibilities open to them with their academic training, interests and past experiences. They acquire a clearer understanding of the "world of work" and a greater appreciation of the skills and abilities they bring to that environment from the "world of the classroom".

WHY PARTICIPATE?

Students who complete a co-op or internship:

- Have the opportunity to test interests and abilities in the real world
- Develop a better sense of their career direction
- Acquire professional work experience and skills
- Enhance their confidence, self-esteem and professionalism
- Gain a competitive edge over other candidates when seeking full time employment
- In most cases, earn a salary to help with education costs

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Students who are interested in enrolling in the Cooperative Education/Internship program at Westchester Community College should **follow the steps outlined in this packet**.

This includes:

- Completing a program application
- Submitting a faculty recommendation
- Preparing a Resume which is reviewed by a career counselor
- Attending an Interview Training Workshop
- Registering and posting an approved resume on our job board CCN-
www.collegecentral.com/sunywcc

The Career & Transfer Center offers both Resume Writing and Interview Training Workshops to assist you through the process. An updated *Resume Guidelines* and *Interview Guidelines* are also available from the Center as well as on-line.

Once the steps have been completed, the Program Coordinator will assist you in applying for positions and contacting employers.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS?

All students with a GPA of 2.5 or higher that have completed a minimum of 12 academic credits (9 credits in their curriculum) are potentially eligible for the program. Completion of Eng 101 Composition & Literature I is also required.

WHAT SEMESTERS IS THE PROGRAM AVAILABLE?

Positions are available during the spring, summer and fall semesters and generally last at least 15 weeks. Students can work part time (generally 12-15 hours per week) or full time. In order to earn academic credit, students must complete a minimum number of work hours which varies by academic department.

WHEN SHOULD I GET STARTED?

It is never too early to get started, but plan to start the enrollment process at least one semester prior to the semester of expected employment. Employers expect to interview and select candidates for positions; therefore we need to allow plenty of time for the interview process.

WHAT SALARY CAN I EXPECT?

Each employer establishes a salary rate. To date, salaries have ranged from \$9.00 - \$15.00 per hour. Some employers offer credit only, while some offer a small stipend.

WILL I BE ELIGIBLE FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT?

Once you have a position, you may be eligible to enroll in the optional credit component of the program. This is determined by your academic department. You will be required to register for the appropriate course in your curriculum, complete specific assignments which includes individual and group meetings, and complete a specific number of hours at the job site. During your placement, you will be supervised by a faculty member from your curriculum that will meet with you, review all your assignments and determine a grade for the course. Credit is available in the following curricula:

Accounting	Business Administration
Communication & Media Arts	Computer Information Systems
Criminal Justice	Visual Arts
Computer Science	Paralegal Studies
Office Technologies	Marketing
Liberal Arts/Social Science	Retail Management/Fashion Merchandising
Engineering Technologies: Civil, Mechanical, Electrical	

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES TO ENROLLING IN THE CREDIT COMPONENT?

Students that elect to earn academic credits for their experience, have the added advantage of advice and support from a faculty member in their curriculum. In many cases, this is the first professional experience for a student. The faculty member will be available to discuss the experience and advise on any problems or concerns that may occur. He/she will also work with the job site supervisor to ensure a valid experience. Required written assignments provide an opportunity for students to create learning goals and focus on the professional skills they are developing. Group discussions on WebCT provide a forum for

students to share their experiences with others in the program as well as focus on specific issues related to professionalism and career success.

MAY I DO MORE THAN ONE CO-OP OR INTERNSHIP?

Students should hold only one position each semester, but there is no limit to the number of semesters they may participate in the program. There is a limit to the number of credits a student can earn through the Cooperative Education/Internship Program; this is determined by each academic department that offers credit.

WILL I BE REQUIRED TO LEAVE MY JOB AFTER ONE SEMESTER?

You will have a discussion with your employer towards the end of the semester regarding your continued employment. In many cases, students are able to retain their position as long as they are still a college student.

MAY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS PARTICIPATE AND EARN A SALARY?

International students with an **F-1 visa** are eligible to participate and earn a salary under the Curricular Practical Training (CPT) component of their visa. They are **required** to register for the academic credits and therefore must be enrolled in a curriculum that offers credit. International students need to be referred by Prof. Ruben Barato who will help them determine when they are eligible to participate.

WHAT IF I ALREADY HAVE A JOB RELATED TO MY CAREER GOALS?

Many students use the Co-op/Internship Program as a flexible way to earn academic credit towards their degree. If you are already working in your chosen career field, you may be eligible to enroll in this program and use your present job as your work experience. Pick up a Request Packet in the Career & Transfer Center and discuss this option with the Co-op/Internship Coordinator. You must be able to show that your current job will be enhanced to provide an opportunity for learning. Academic credit will not be awarded for performing current duties.

AM I GUARANTEED A PLACEMENT?

While we will do all we can to assist you in finding a position, **we cannot guarantee placements to students.** Whether or not you obtain a position will depend on how well you fare in the job search process. We will help you to develop an effective resume and will coach you on successful interviewing. Once provided with the opportunity for an interview, however, you will need to secure the position yourself, often in competition with other students. The prospective employer makes the final decision on whether or not you get hired. The process will take time, you will need to start early and be patient.

GETTING STARTED

PROCEDURES FOR PARTICIPATION

First-

- Complete Information Card and **Program Application**
- Ask a faculty member from your curriculum to complete the **Faculty Recommendation Form**
(All forms are attached and should be returned to the Career & Transfer Center, STC 201)

Next-

- Prepare a resume draft (use the *WCC Resume Guidelines* to assist you or attend a Resume Prep workshop)
- Attend an Interview Training Workshop
(Workshop schedules are available in the Career & Transfer Center or on-line at www.sunywcc.edu/ctcenter)
- Register and post your approved resume on our **on-line job board College Central Network-**
www.collegecentral.com/sunywcc

When all steps are completed, make an appointment with the Program Coordinator to discuss your academic program, career aspirations and review your resume.

At this point you will begin selecting potential positions, send your resume and hopefully interview for positions under the direction of the Program Coordinator. Remember that new positions are continually being developed. **When interviews are obtained and placements secured, you will need to report back to the Program Coordinator as to your progress.** We like to know when you are offered a position and whether or not you would like to be referred for other positions. We will be better able to assist you in your job search when we have up to date information on your progress.

RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE OF THE EMPLOYER

- Understand and promote the concept of experiential learning
- Provide appropriate orientation and training as needed for fulfillment of job responsibilities
- Provide a safe and healthy work environment for students. Inform students of all safety regulations
- Communicate and meet with the student's faculty advisor during the semester to provide meaningful feedback on the student's performance
- With students, identify individual and departmental goals to be realized during work period.
- Provide positions that will challenge students and provide a variety of exposure with increasing levels of responsibility; opportunities for group and individual work and a chance to address individual career goals
- Provide meaningful experiences and supervision related to the students objectives and professional growth
- Assist students with developing meaningful and appropriate learning objectives
- Assist the college in the evaluation process of students in the Cooperative Education & Internship Program
- Provide technical assistance and training as appropriate
- Allow the students to learn and experience a realistic overview of the profession
- Periodically review and discuss with students his/her progress and development toward objectives

ROLE OF THE CO-OP/INTERNSHIP COORDINATOR/CAREER SERVICES

- Coordinate workshops in resume writing and interviewing in preparation for co-op/internship job search
- Contact employers to generate potential positions
- Serve as a liaison between students, faculty advisors and employers to foster good work relationships and ensure quality of the learning/work experiences
- Assist students in securing a position and enrolling for academic credit when indicated

ROLE OF THE STUDENT

- Maintain contact with the Co-op/Internship Coordinator for progress in securing a placement
- Report all interviews scheduled and job offers made/accepted
- Once placed, students must abide by the regulations and policies of the employer
- Report to work promptly, and in the event of an emergency, notify the employer

TIPS ON FINDING A CO-OP OR INTERNSHIP:

- Achieve proficiency in basic skills such as reading, writing and math
- Learn to communicate and listen well
- Build confidence by getting to know yourself- your interests, strengths and skills
- Develop computer skills
- When scheduling classes, try to arrange blocks of time to accommodate a 15 hour per week work schedule
- Start early- many opportunities have a very early deadline for applications
- Know what you have to offer a firm
- Improve your interviewing skills by trying a taped mock interview
- Use all resources available for searching
- Review the listings for CCN, The WCC Career Center online listing service
- Research the periodicals available in the Career Center Resource Room
- Network! Speak with faculty, family, friends, former/current employers, coaches, and classmates. Ask for ideas and contacts in your career field of interest
- Keep your options open when deciding on a career path
- Be proactive! Don't give up until you get what you want!

Still have Questions?

Attend a Co-op/Internship Information Session

Make an appointment with the Co-op/Internship Coordinator

Contact the Co-op/Coordinator by phone or email

Stop in to the Career & Transfer Center to see the Coordinator

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Meet the Career & Transfer Center Staff/Faculty

Professional Staff

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