

**North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
Office of Career Services
Murphy Hall, Room 101**

**COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM
INFORMATION PACKET**

What is cooperative education?

Cooperative Education (Co-op) is an optional, counseling-centered program that offers students the opportunity to alternate periods of academic study with periods of work closely related to their major field of study. The combination of academic study and work produces an overall learning experience that gives greater meaning to students' studies and more direction to career development.

This program is non-compulsory; however, the University urges students to gain work experiences either through internships or cooperative education assignments prior to graduation. The program is student oriented and centralized.

Who can participate?

Any undergraduate and graduate students seeking a degree at North Carolina A&T State University (NCA&T) can participate. Participants must establish and maintain at least a 2.0 overall grade point average. Freshmen must complete their first academic year prior to their first work assignment. Transfer students must complete one semester.

Students must be registered with the Office of Career Services (OCS).

Benefits from participating in co-op.

Personally: Boost your maturity and self-confidence; improve your human relations skills; prepare for life after graduation; integrate your faith and values with work; enjoy a greater clarity About career decisions.

Academically: Integrate classroom theory with real-life experiences; understand the relevance of your course work; increase your motivation to learn; use resources that are not available on campus.

Professionally: Explore a potential career field; develop career-related skills and abilities, including effective job search, resume writing and interviewing techniques; establish a work history; observe professional people and behavior; build a network of professional contacts, develop potential mentoring relationships; gain a competitive edge for employment or graduate school admission.

How long is a co-op assignment?

Typically, a co-op assignment lasts a full fall or spring semester (12-16 weeks). Usually an employer will require at least two sessions, which can include one summer session.

The following charts illustrate some common school-work sessions

Two Co-op Assignments

Year	1	2	3	4	5
Fall	Academic Studies	Academic Studies	Co-op	Academic Studies	Academic Studies
Spring	Academic Studies	Co-op	Academic Studies	Academic Studies	
Summer	Vacation	Academic Studies	Academic Studies	Optional	

Three Co-op Assignments

Year	1	2	3	4	5
Fall	Academic Studies	Academic Studies	Co-op	Academic Studies	Academic Studies
Spring	Academic Studies	Academic Studies	Academic Studies	Co-op	Academic Studies
Summer	Vacation	Academic Studies	Academic Studies	Co-op	

Other scenarios are possible. Discuss specifics with your advisor and co-op coordinator.

Finding and applying for a co-op position.

Registration with the Office of Career Services (OCS) is required. To register with OCS, you must attend an orientation session. Sign up for an orientation session online by visiting www.careerserv.ncat.edu or coming by Murphy Hall, Room 101. Also, take advantage of the many services and resources provided in the OCS towards your professional development (i.e., resume development, workshops, and mock interviews).

Once registered with the Office of Career Services, several options are available to start the process of searching for a co-op.

1. Search and sign up online for *On-campus Interviews* using AggieTrak.
2. Search and apply for positions listed in the online *Internship and Co-op Positions* on-line. (updated monthly)
3. Search and apply for positions listed on AggieTrak by clicking on “*Jobs and Internships*”.
4. Receive emails first from OCS of available positions in your area.
5. Resume referrals to employers.

The Cooperative Education Program is designed to help students find the best opportunities. However, it is up to the student to ensure success by utilizing a variety of career resources offered through the Office of Career Services (i.e., preparing a resume, attending workshops, participating in mock interviews and researching job opportunities). There are no guarantees that students will secure a co-op assignment. Barriers to obtaining a co-op position include inflexibility regarding the geographic location in which students are willing to work, the term in which begin working and having a GPA that is lower than what employers typically desire.

Accepted a co-op position, what's next?

After accepting a co-op assignment, go to the Office of Career Services in Room 101 Murphy Hall meet with the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning, complete a *Prospective Co-op Student Form* and pick up an *Information Packet*.

Acceptance of a co-op position, verbally and/or written, is considered final. *(If an emergency arises, contact the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning immediately)*

Note: Students who have not registered or contacted OCS and have accepted a co-op assignment may be withdrawn from the University by the Registrar. Withdrawal could affect your eligibility for financial aid for the following semester.

Is there a fee for participating in co-op?

Yes. If a student is receiving academic credit, he/she will sign up and pay for the co-op course. Students who don't receive credit and are not taking classes will be charged a \$30.00 fee by the University to keep them in good standing.

How much will I be paid?

Compensation is set by the employer and depends on the industry, the level of the position, and the local economy. The primary goal as a co-op student should be to obtain the best work and educational experience possible. At this point in a student's career, salary should not be a major factor in deciding which co-op offer to accept.

Vacation while on co-op.

Vacations usually occur only at the end of an academic semester. The University calendar does not allow for vacations at any time during a co-op assignment. Students are expected to work from the beginning to the end of the co-op assignment.

Taking time off while on co-op.

Employers expect co-ops to be responsible with regular and punctual attendance. As an employee, the student must arrange for personal and college-related commitments to take place outside of regular working hours. If time off from work is needed for special circumstances, the student must contact the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning before requesting permission from the employer.

Taking courses while on co-op.

Whenever work and student activity conflict with a co-op assignment, the assignment must come first. Students may enroll in classes that take place outside of their regular working hours. However, if students are interested in taking a course that interferes with their co-op commitment, they must petition and receive approval from both the co-op coordinator and employer prior to accepting the co-op position.

Living arrangements while on co-op.

Planning for housing and transportation needs is important. If a student lives on campus and accepts a position outside the Triad area, the housing deposit may transfer to another semester. A letter should be written to the director of residence life notifying him of the co-op assignment. A copy of the letter should also be given to the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning. Ultimately, students are responsible for finding their own housing and transportation near their co-op assignment. However, some employers may provide housing and relocation assistance.

Academic credit for co-op.

Each department on campus allocates academic credit differently. Discuss plans to participate in a co-op and how to receive academic credit with the department chairperson. If the school/department requires enrollment in a course while on work assignment, complete the *Academic Credit Form* (available on line) and get appropriate signatures.

Provide in order the following documents below at the appropriate time to the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning to receive academic credit. These documents will be forwarded with a formal recommendation letter to your Department Chairperson and credit and/or a grade will be given.

- a. **Academic Credit Form** (*Turn in before leaving for co-op assignment.*)
- b. **Position Description and Offer/Acceptance Letter** (*Turn in before leaving for co-op assignment.*)
- c. **Agreement Form** (*Turn in before leaving for co-op assignment.*)
- d. **Report to Work Form** (*Turn in two weeks after reporting to co-op assignment.*)
- e. **Student Evaluation Form** (*Turn in a week before the semesters and/or co-op assignment end.*)
- f. **Employer Evaluation Form** (*Turn in a week before the semesters and/or co-op assignment end.*)
- g. **Report** - at least 500 (five hundred) words typed (*Turn in a week before the semester and/or co-op assignment end.*)

The report should cover some of the following:

- * Type of work/projects performed
- * Equipment/tools/materials used in completing work/projects
- * Relatedness to course(s) in current curriculum
- * Level of success in project(s)
- * What was learned
- * How results will be used at company/agency
- * Level of interaction with co-workers
- * Level of responsibility

How will work performance be evaluated?

The supervisor will use the Employer Evaluation Form to evaluate various aspects the student's performance. The site supervisor should discuss the performance rating and give a copy of the completed evaluation form to the student. It is the student's responsibility to return all evaluation forms to the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning.

Identification/Work eligibility

Each time a student begins a new job in the United States, he/she will be asked to verify both work eligibility and identity by completing an I-9 form provided by the employer. All students, including international students, must have a Social Security number. All international students or non-immigrant visas must obtain (or verify) co-op authorization at the International Student and Scholars Office (ISSO), before the first day of co-op employment. Working without permission is a very serious violation of visa status.

Social Security requirement

All students, including international students, must have a Social Security number from the U.S. Social Security Administration before working on co-op. If the student doesn't have a Social Security number, go to the ISSO for information about applying for one. Application should be made no later than one semester prior to co-op assignment.

Income tax

Federal law requires you to complete a W-4 form with your employer before beginning work. This form ensures that the appropriate federal and state taxes will be deducted from your wages. If the employer does not deduct these taxes, the student will still be responsible for paying them. International students are also required to pay federal and state taxes.

Agreeing to confidentiality

In many technical and professional fields, students might work in research, health care, product development and improvement, or marketing activities that generate patentable or confidential information. To work in one of these settings, the student may be asked to sign an agreement that protects the employer from unauthorized disclosure of such information. The student is legally bound by terms of this agreement in all cases. Information gathered while on a co-op assignment cannot be used in any projects, term papers, or reports unless your employer signs a release. If there are any questions or concerns about signing an agreement, discuss them with the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning.

Students with disabilities

Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation for the physical or mental limitations of a qualified individual with a disability. If a student needs reasonable accommodation to apply for a co-op position or perform essential job functions, the student should inform the staff at the Veteran and Disability Support Office and the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning for more information.

Dealing with stressful and uncomfortable situations is part of the workplace learning experience.

As with every other aspect of experiential learning, the University and the Office of Career Services are here to support and guide the student as necessary. The Office encourages the student to make an effort to resolve issues on his/her own with the immediate supervisor or another manager at the job site. Should the student feel uncomfortable discussing a problem with the supervisor, contact the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning for assistance or advice. It is important to address issues as they arise, rather than postpone such a discussion or ignore the problem.

Absences and medical leaves

Students should contact the employer immediately if they must be absent because of illness or emergency. If the absence is for a week or more, also call the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning. If the student must miss work because of a work-related injury or illness, he/she should inform the supervisor immediately. Also be sure to formally report the illness or injury to the employer according to the employer's regulations.

Discrimination

North Carolina A&T State University does not condone any form of discrimination or harassment toward students, either on or off campus. Although the Office of Career Services makes reasonable efforts to ensure that co-op sites are free of discriminatory practices, it is possible that a co-op student may experience illegal or unethical behavior in the workplace. If a student experiences any kind of harassment or unfair treatment on the basis of race, color, religion, religious creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, ancestry, genetics, disability, or veteran status during a job interview or while employed, contact the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning immediately. Students will not be penalized in anyway for reporting such a situation.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination and is a serious concern. There are two types of sexual harassment: quid pro quo and hostile environment. Quid pro quo normally occurs when someone with authority makes submission to sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature an explicit or implicit term or condition of evaluation, employment, advancement, training, compensation, or opportunity for professional development. Hostile environment involves verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. If a student feels he/she is a victim of sexual harassment while on a co-op assignment, contact the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning. After being notified of the experience, the Office of Career Services will work to resolve the problem.

Discharge from a co-op position

Employers may discharge a co-op student, just as they would any other employee. Reasons may include unsatisfactory performance, incompetence, inability to perform expected tasks, irregular attendance or tardiness, or unacceptable attitude or behavior. However, the Office of Career Services encourages employers to contact us before initiating any action. The Assistant Director for Experiential Learning will work with the student and employer to resolve the problem.

Deserting a co-op position

Students who leave a co-op position without notifying the Assistant Director for Experiential Learning will automatically be suspended from OCS and online access blocked. Additional disciplinary action may also occur.

Disciplinary action, co-op probation, and suspension

Unsatisfactory job performance is handled in various ways, depending on the nature of the problem. The Assistant Director for Experiential Learning will determine if the student's violation of the rules or behavior that resulted in discharge from the job constitutes failure to complete the co-op term satisfactorily. Although first offenses usually result in an oral or written warning, serious or repeated offenses may be referred to the college/school Dean/Chairperson. The student may be refused further co-op employment referrals. While on a co-op assignment, students must also follow the University's Student Code of Conduct.

Twelve Steps to a Successful Co-op

1. Adopt the right attitude.
2. Adjust your expectations.
3. Master breaking-in skills.
4. Manage the impressions you make.
5. Build effective relationships.
6. Become a good follower.
7. Understand your organization's culture.
8. Develop organizational savvy.
9. Understand your new-hire role.
10. Develop work savvy.
11. Master the tasks of your job.
12. Acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities you need.

Source: *Job Choices 2004*

Some Employers Who Successfully Recruited A&T Students for Co-op

A Plus Communications
Aberdeen Proving Ground
Air Force Research Laboratory West
Ambassadors for Christ International
Ministries
American Multimedia Inc.
Army Joint Munitions Command
BD Bioscience
Becton Dickerson Bioscience
Bellsouth Corporate
Biomerieux
Blockbuster Video
BMW Manufacturing
Boeing
Bureau of East Asian & Pacific Affairs, U.S.
State Department
Cargill Inc.
Caterpillar, Inc.
Centurion Systems
CIA
City of High Point Electrics
Cummins
Department of Defense: NSA
Eagle Aviation
Eastman Chemical Company
Eaton Corp.
Environmental Protection Agency
eToys Direct
Exum Motor Sports
FAA
General Electric
Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company
Guilford Mills
Harley Davidson
Harley-Davidson Motor Company
Hayes Taylor YMCA
Heitz and Darinzi Motor Sports LLC
Honeywell
Howard University-MSRCE/EE
IBM
Intel
Kay Chemical Company
Kimberly-Clark Corporation
Klaussner Furniture Industries
Lorillard Tobacco Company
Lutheran Family Services
MBS Entertainment
NASA
NASA Marshall Space Flight Center
National Security Agency
NAVFAC (Naval Facilities Engineering
Command
NCAT/School of Technology
NC-CAP c/o Public School Forum of North
Carolina
Newman Machine Co. Inc.
Northrop Grumman Corporation
Paytec Communications
Petty Enterprises
Philip Morris
Piedmont Tractor, LLC
Pop Century Resort
Pratt & Whitney
Rockwell Collins, Inc.
Rufaro Technology, LLC
Sandvik Coromant
Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center
Spectrum Lab. Network
SPGRE UNC Chapel Hill School of
Information and Library Sciences
Spherion
Stock Car Steel and Aluminum
Student Technology Services/NCAT
Syngenta
The Dow Chemical
Time Warner Cable
Toyota Motor Manufacturing North
America
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
UNC in Washington Program
University of Chapel Hill/Gary Tonkins
Operations Center
US Army Corps of Engineers
Veteran's Hospital of Buffalo, NY
Wake Forest Baptist Medical School

Walt Disney World

XMG Internet Marketing Group