

## VI-F-1: Cooperative Education Policy

### COOPERATIVE EDUCATION POLICY

Cooperative Education “Co-ops” are full-time, paid positions lasting from three-to-six months.

A Saunders College undergraduate student must have a co-op experience based on the policies outlined below:

- a. One semester of full-time employment (35-to-40 hours a week for 16 weeks);  
OR
- b. Any combination of two of the following:
  - summer term (at least 8 weeks) of full-time employment;
  - semester of part-time employment (15-to-20 hours a week for 16 weeks)

With assistant dean of student services approval, a study abroad experience may be used to satisfy a maximum of one summer term of co-op experience. (*Source: Saunders College Faculty/Staff Minutes, March 18, 2011*)

No academic credit is granted for the co-op, but formal recording of the co-op is made on the student’s transcript indicating a grade of “S” or “F”.

Students cannot take more than 6 semester credits of academic coursework during any term he or she is registered for a full-time co-op.

Students cannot take more than 12 semester credits of academic coursework during any term he or she is registered for a part-time co-op.

A co-op registration form must be completed online by the student and approved before the co-op is started.

Within the last two weeks of the term in which the co-op is completed, the student must submit a co-op report.

### OBJECTIVES OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

- To expose students to the work environment.
- To give students the opportunity to assess career opportunities in the industry.
- To assist students in planning their remaining curriculum in order to achieve their career goals and objectives.
- To develop students’ ability to analyze and integrate the academic cognitive knowledge in their major field of study with the experience gained from the co-op employment.

### UNDERGRADUATE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION POLICY

- All Saunders College undergraduate students are required to complete their cooperative educational experience after their sophomore year but prior to their

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final academic term. Saunders will not award its degree until the co-op has been completed to the satisfaction of the faculty.

- A co-op experience must be in a work setting approved for the student's major and directly related to that major.
- Some students choose to co-op more than the required one block of co-op.
- Students will complete their co-op requirements prior to their last term.
- An exception to the co-op requirements must be approved by the assistant dean of student services.

### **UNDERGRADUATE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION ELIGIBILITY**

- To be eligible for co-op, a the student must:
  - Be in good academic standing (i.e., not be on academic probation or on “contract”).
  - Have an overall GPA of 2.0 or higher
  - Be at least a 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate student
  - Have at least one academic term remaining in their program.
- International students with an F or J visa must have written authorization from an RIT international student adviser and must have completed at least two consecutive terms of full-time study at RIT.

### **GRADUATE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION POLICY**

- Co-ops are optional for Saunders College MBA and MS students. However, MBA and MS students without substantial job experience may want to complete a co-op.
- Any MS student who wishes to take a co-op must understand that courses required for graduation may only be offered during certain terms, and, as a consequence of doing a co-op, graduation may be delayed. It is therefore important for any MS student to discuss program completion steps with an advisor prior to departing on a co-op.
- An exception to the co-op requirements must be approved by the assistant dean of student services.

### **GRADUATE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION ELIGIBILITY**

- To be eligible for co-op, a the student must:
  - Be in good academic standing (i.e., not be on academic probation or on “contract”).
  - Have an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher

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- Have successfully completed at least six Saunders College graduate-level courses. MBA students must have completed at least one course in their concentration area.
- Have at least one academic term remaining in their program.
- International students with an F or J visa must have written authorization from an RIT international student adviser and must have completed at least two consecutive terms of full-time study at RIT.

### **CO-OP RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Students:**

- Shall register the co-op using the Job Zone link on the Office for Cooperative Education and Career Services website.
- Shall complete, in preparation for and prior to the co-op, workshops offered by the Co-op Office.
- Shall prepare a suitable resume
- Shall think about the real suitability of a particular position for his/her own objectives.
- Shall prepare for and be on-time for interviews.
- Shall relate the experience they are gaining to their course work.
- Shall evaluate the career potential of the company and professional discipline in which the co-op is located.
- Shall write and submit the co-op report.

Credit for the co-op experience is based upon:

- Satisfactory completion of the co-op.
- Timely and satisfactory completion of the required co-op report.
- Receipt by the college of the employer's performance evaluations rating student performance "satisfactory" or better.
- An evaluation of the experience by the student.

#### **Faculty Advisors:**

- Should, when asked or as the opportunity presents itself, advise students regarding relevant career fields. Have the responsibility to counsel co-op students regarding a relevant career field or professional discipline question. This is an advising or counseling role, not a consulting role.
- Should provide, when possible, "contacts" for co-op development, to the Co-op Office.
- Will review and approve co-op reports.

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### **Student Services Department:**

- This unit of the college will serve as the administrative bridge between faculty, students and the office of Cooperative Education and Career Services and will work with these groups to develop new co-op placements.
- Student Services staff will coordinate and process all paperwork necessary for co-ops and co-op waivers.

### **Office for Cooperative Education and Career Services:**

- Shall work with Saunders College and employers to develop co-op positions.
- Shall provide workshops and counseling to prepare students for the non-academic aspects of co-op and placement.
- Shall help the college audit, on a continuing but selective basis, the suitability of active co-op positions.

### **Co-op Employers:**

- Shall provide accurate, reasonably complete descriptions of co-op job positions and expectations.
- Shall provide the position and experience “as advertised.”
- Shall help students achieve co-op objectives with respect to integrating academic and work experience and relating to career opportunities.
- Shall maintain records of student performance sufficient to enable a sound evaluation at the end of the co-op.
- Shall notify Student Services immediately of any questions or problems that arise during co-op, for which college participation would be appropriate.
- Are responsible for providing a written evaluation of co-op student performance to the college within 30 days of the end of the co-op using the form provided by the Cooperative Education and Career Services Office.

## **CO-OP EVALUATION GUIDELINES**

The college believes that exposure to the work environment will help students assess their career objectives, enhance the development of their academic skills and develop attitudes necessary for success in a chosen profession.

The college utilizes the following evaluation procedures:

- A formal written report by the student to be completed at the end of the academic term in which the student is doing their co-op. The report will be evaluated by the co-op area liaison. The liaison will also review the employer-provided evaluation and the student-provided evaluation of the experience.

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- An evaluation of the student's performance by the co-op employer. This evaluation is sent by the employer directly to the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services before the last week of the co-op term.
- An evaluation of the experience by the student.

### **CO-OP REPORT GUIDELINES**

Co-op reports must be submitted online by going to the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services website. <http://www.rit.edu/emcs/oce/students?usertype=student>

### **UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS TRANSFERRAL OF CO-OP**

A student may request that he/she be exempt from co-op based on previous co-ops completed in another major.

If a student is changing majors within Saunders College, any completed co-ops will be counted toward the requirement for graduation. Those individuals responsible for transfer evaluations will simply indicate on the new worksheet the number of co-ops already completed.

If a student is entering Saunders College from another college within RIT, a business co-op is still required. Once accepted into the college, the student may petition for exemption from the co-op requirement by submitting documentation of the experience.

### **CO-OP SUBSTITUTION FOR STUDY ABROAD**

One semester of study abroad may be substituted for one summer term of co-op. Pre-approval is required from the assistant dean of student services. A weekly journal and report are required and must be submitted to the Student Services Office within two weeks of the end of the study-abroad experience. Upon submission of transcripts, students will receive the co-op substitution. (*Source: Saunders College Faculty/Staff Minutes, March 18, 2011*)

### **WAIVER OF CO-OP**

In certain situations, it may be appropriate for the co-op experience to be waived from the student's degree requirements. This may occur when the student shows evidence of having met the objectives of co-op through prior experience(s). Review of these requests is on an individual basis.

Waivers must be submitted before the student's final term.

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### **WAIVER CRITERIA**

The student's formal request should be reviewed to determine whether or not the work experience described meets the objectives of the co-op work requirements. These objectives are as follows:

- Exposure to work environment.
- Assessment of career opportunities in a discipline and/or industry.
- Assistance in planning their own curriculum to achieve career objectives.
- Development of the ability to analyze and integrate academic knowledge in a major field with work experience or when the experience is complementary to the student's field of study or career interests.

Achievement of these objectives via prior experience may be presumed to exist if a person has two or more years (equivalent) of responsible work experience in the military. Summer training camp for R.O.T.C. students may also be used to waive one summer of co-op.

Part-time matriculated students, who are currently working full time and have been for at least two years, can request a waiver of the co-op requirement.

### **WAIVER PROCEDURE**

Students will submit a co-op waiver form, resume, and co-op report to the assistant dean of student services. Once the paperwork is received and the job is verified, the waiver request will be forwarded to the co-op area liaison for approval. If the waiver is approved, Student Services will submit the waiver paperwork to the Office of the Registrar. If the waiver is denied, the assistant dean of student services will notify the student of the decision.

### **CO-OP WAIVER WORK REPORT GUIDELINES**

The report should be organized utilizing the following subheadings. It should be a well-developed narrative report rather than a listing. The following should serve as guidelines for organizing the paper.

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. Name of organization
- B. Description of the ownership (e.g., single proprietorship, division of corporation, etc.)

#### **II. Nature of the Business**

Describe the core business activities.

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### III. Customer/Competitor Information

- A. Identify major customers.
- B. What approaches are used in attracting and retaining the customer or end user?
- C. Identify major competitors and evaluate how the organization is doing relative to them (e.g., revenue, market share, etc.)

### IV. Organizational Structure and Management

- A. What is your organization's relationship to any ownership group (e.g., a subsidiary)?-
- B. Describe your position and that of your immediate supervisor (include detailed description of your job responsibilities).
- C. How would you describe your relationship with your immediate supervisor?
- D. How would you describe employee morale within your division?

### V. Integration of Course Work (It is critical that you develop this section in detail).

- A. What courses taken prior to your co-op experience were the most helpful to you in your position and why?
- B. Was there a course or courses that could have better prepared you for your co-op? Please discuss.
- C. What skills or knowledge do you want to acquire before your next work experience? Why are these skills and knowledge important to you?

### VI. Your Suggestions

What creative ideas or suggestions do you have for this organization (e.g., any ideas for a better organizational structure to facilitate better flow of communication or reduce conflict)?

### VII. Summary

How did this experience contribute to your career exploration/plans?

Your co-op work report should be a short-to-moderate length (minimum of 5 pages, maximum of 10 pages).

## **ACCEPTANCE OF INTERNSHIPS (UNPAID CO-OPS) FOR CO-OP CREDIT**

Desirably, co-op credit should be given only for paid positions. However, there may be situations in which the nature and length of an internship opportunity may be equivalent to the experience obtained in a paid co-op position. In such cases, as with regular co-op positions, pre-authorization that a position is acceptable for co-op credit is provided by the co-op area liaison. Other qualifying conditions for achievement of co-op credit for an internship are identical to those of a regular co-op. (*Source: Administrative Council Meeting Minutes, April 21, 2009*)

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*Issued with consolidation/minimal revision of previous policies: Administrative/Strategic Planning Council, Jan. 10, 2012. Updated July 31, 2013 for semester conversion based on approved motion at March 18, 2011 Faculty-Staff meeting. Updated and approved by the Executive Council, July 18, 2016.*