Students, employers meet in co-op week

Future employees to 'get feet wet' before graduation, career search

By Suzy Stollmaler
Lantern staff writer

Students can 'get their feet wet' before graduating and entering the job market through cooperative education, said an advocate of co-op programs.

"I try to stress to students that a lot of times, being able to co-op really opens your eyes to what the job market offers," said Frank Chiong, personnel assistant for American Electric Power in Columbus.

Chiong will be one of the employers participating in the Ohio State Cooperative Education Awareness Week, Oct. 31 through Nov. 4.

Sally Krueschoff, director of cooperative education for the colleges of arts and science, said students do not take advantage of the co-op program.

"Our goal is to heighten student awareness (of the program) because we have more jobs than available students," she said. "The jobs are competitive, but students just aren't using offices as much as they should be."

Krueschoff said the goal of awareness week is to have 3,000 students attend sessions concerning co-op programs.

The three co-op programs working together to promote the awareness week are from the College of Business, the College of Engineering and the Colleges of Arts and Science.

Krueschoff said the week will include a series of events from which the university community can learn more about the educational and professional benefits of a co-op experience.

There will be two panel discussions at which one student from each program will discuss their co-op experience. Each program will then divide up and have its own orientation, said Krueschoff.

The panel discussions will take place at 9 a.m. today and 11 a.m. Thursday in Buckeye Suites A, B and C in the Ohio Union.

Another panel composed of three seniors, one student who has co-oped and two students with no co-op experience, and a co-op employer will present a program entitled "To Co-op or Not to Co-op: That is the Question!" on Wednesday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

On Thursday there will also be a mock interviewing session from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., and an interviewing workshop at 2:30 p.m. Both sessions will be held in the Buckeye Suites.

Joann Baker, senior personnel representative for Chemical Abstracts, will participate in Wednesday's panel. She said co-oping provides an excellent opportunity for students and employees to get together.

"Students can gain knowledge about a potential career and employers can gain fresh ideas," Baker said. "Employers can find out whether a student is going to be a good worker down the road, so that if they are hired, the employer is not taking as much of a chance, and less training is needed."

Baker said students who co-op for Chemical Abstracts are asked to critique the company or the work that is done.

"There have been suggestions that we have taken to heart - that helped us find a better way to do things. The students are looking at everything with a fresh approach," she said.

Baker added there has been a lot of negative voice in the past regarding hiring co-op students.

"Some employers would say 'Oh, these kids don't know enough,' but attitudes changed quickly," she said. "As long as students were given productive work, rather than just being a paper runner, they were able to really give some helpful ideas."

"We really think through what students are doing, and we let students tell us what they think," she said.

Chiong said, "Some students tend to go out in the world with idealized notions of what is out there. Co-oping allows them to get a feel of what their expected to do."

"For instance, in interviewing for a job, those who have co-oped tend to come across as more knowledgeable and prepared," he said.
Co-op programs well received

By Suzy Stollmaier
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Students received valuable information about career experience this week through Ohio State’s second annual Cooperative Education Awareness Week.

The colleges of business, engineering, and arts and sciences kicked off co-op programs Tuesday with a discussion panel made up of co-op students from each of the three colleges and an orientation of the individual co-op programs.

Nina Whitfield, director of the professional practice program in the College of Business, said Tuesday’s panel left students enthusiastic and looking forward to the rest of the week’s programs.

Steven Fuller, a freshman from Westerville majoring in business and finance, said the first panel was very informative.

“It was a nice overview. I gained insight on how to participate in the program and I am a little more aware about whether I can or cannot co-op and if I did, when I’d be able to,” Fuller said.

Steve Rice, a junior in business and finance from Worthington, said, “It was very positive. It gave me the incentive to go into a co-op or internship before I graduate.”

“Co-op or Not to Co-op: The Student and Employer Perspective” was the panel discussion Wednesday. The panel was made up of an employer and three seniors — one with co-op experience and two without.

Susan Jacques, personnel representative from Children’s Hospital and an OSU alumnus, said because she did not have co-op experience, she had a year-and-a-half job search before getting into the field of human resources.

Her main message to students was to take the time to do a co-op because their graduation date will not matter if they have to wait a long time to get a job.

Sally Kreuchauf, director of cooperative education for the College of Arts and Sciences, said the purpose of co-oping is “to gain experience prior to graduation.”

“According to the directory of occupational titles, there are over 22,000 different job titles, and it’s outrageous to think that we’re suppose to pick one of those without trying it on first,” she said.

Kreuchauf said the three co-op programs placed approximately 3,500 Ohio State students in co-op jobs last year.

She explained the arts and sciences co-op program is very flexible to students.

Judy McDonald, director of cooperative education for the College of Engineering said, “My program is more structured than arts and sciences. Students must do two separate work periods while not taking classes — there are no part-time opportunities.”

She said if students choose to, they can co-op one summer quarter, but their second co-op period must be a quarter other than summer.

“Company recruiters looking for full-time employees tell me continually that they are looking for students with experience,” McDonald said. “A student is giving him or herself the advantage by participating in cooperative education because it helps them decide the direction they want before they graduate.”

As for the co-op programs at Ohio State, April Payton, a senior from Des Moines, said, “I think it’s lacking in some aspects because there’s not a very passive — it’s more up to the students. There are a lot of job opportunities, but there’s no one main place to go.”

Parker, on the other hand, feels Ohio State’s co-op program is one of the best.

“In the position I had with IBM I saw a lot of universities come through, and Ohio State is well-rounded and well-thought of by a lot of companies,” she said. “Many universities have mandatory co-op assignments, whereas at Ohio State co-oping is volunteer so it’s more competitive. If you decide to do it, you’re going to have a better chance.”