Purpose of the Program

The cooperative education/field experience program is designed to provide a work-study experience in the various professional employment settings of interest to students majoring in Ecology and Environmental Sciences. This program will:

- Enable students to explore occupations in which they have an interest.
- Provide students with the opportunity to apply theoretical principles developed in the classroom in a practical environment.
- Enable students to develop an appreciation of the relationship between formal education and job success, thereby increasing their self-confidence, maturity, and sense of responsibility.
- Improve job placement for program graduates.
- Provide students with a combination of work experience and income earning opportunity.

Procedure

Eligibility Requirements

All interested junior or senior students in good standing (not on academic probation) majoring in Ecology and Environmental Sciences are eligible to apply. Most often students in the program will identify employers and petition for inclusion of a specific job-opportunity as a cooperative education/field experience placement. Employers may also identify prospective work experiences for which they are seeking students to participate. The program faculty will screen applicants for these opportunities, but the final selection will be at the discretion of the cooperating employer.

Expectations of Employer

The participants in the cooperative education/field experience program will be provided an opportunity to interview potential intern participants. If the employer chooses to participate in the program, it is expected to provide a variety of work experiences for the student. The off-campus experience normally will provide the student with a broad overview of the operational and material functions of the firm or agency with which the student is serving.

Specifically cooperating employers will be expected to:

- Participate in the development of the student’s plan of work.
- Provide a general schedule of activities, experiences, and responsibilities planned for the student.
- Identify the person who will be responsible for supervising the student and providing evaluations.
- Complete an interim evaluation of the student’s work mid-way through the experience. The evaluation should be reviewed with the student and returned to the University supervisor.
- Provide a final evaluation of the student’s work during the last week of the experience. The evaluation should be reviewed with the student and returned to the University supervisor.
Make recommendations to the Ecology and Environmental Sciences Program for general improvements in the cooperative education/field experience program.

Expectations of the Student
Students are expected to take primary responsibility for the success of their own cooperative education/field experience placement. Among other tasks, students should:

- Prepare a draft plan of work for the prospective experience that outlines objectives and activities.
- Finalize the plan of work based on the comments of the employer and University supervisor.
- Maintain a daily journal of activities during the experience.
- Make periodic, typically weekly, reports to the University supervisor.
- Prepare a comprehensive final report (Appendix A).
- Comply with responsibilities outlined in the Appendix B.

Responsibilities of the Ecology and Environmental Sciences Program
The Ecology and Environmental Sciences Program will be responsible for program supervision with a faculty member designated as cooperative education/field experience program coordinator. If the student’s proposed study warrants, the coordinator will establish an ad hoc committee that will normally include the student’s advisor and one other faculty member. The program supervisor will regularly contact each student by telephone or email and normally make at least one on-the-job visit during the off-campus work period.

Evaluation Procedure
Following the completion of the experience, the student and coordinator will discuss the benefits derived, suggested changes, and overall value of the experience to the student. Reports prepared on the work-study experiences and the program should also include assessments of the program. Employers are encouraged to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the cooperative education/field experience program.

Academic Credit
Academic credit will be awarded for cooperative education/field experience work on the basis of a maximum eight credits for each semester of full-time experience. Grading will be on a pass-fail basis. A maximum of 16 credits from all such experiences will be allowed.

An ad hoc committee of the Ecology and Environmental Sciences faculty would determine the standards for credit, amount of credit to be given and the qualification of a particular proposal for a co-op work experience. The following factors will be considered:

- Nature of the work experience.
- Length of the work experience.
- Academic value of the experience in relationship to the student’s major

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION FINAL REPORT OUTLINE
Items to be included in your final report (8 -- 10 pages)
1. Describe your field placement. (Name, location, principal product, organization, key contact person, etc.)
2. Describe purpose/objectives. (Initially, what did you expect to receive from the experience?)
3. Were your expectations met? If different, how were they different?)
4. Summarize the experience as it related to your plan of work, including:
   ▪ Activities in the plan of work that were completed.
   ▪ Activities in the plan of work that were not completed.
   ▪ Activities not in the plan of work that were completed.
5. Describe the relationship(s) you saw between your academic major and the activities you performed.
6. Identify strengths and weaknesses you have discovered in yourself as a result of this experience.
7. Identify a problem area faced by your employer that came to your attention during the placement.
8. Consider how this experience confirmed or modified your ideas and plans for a career.
9. Develop suggestions you would make to another cooperative education student considering this specific field placement.
10. Include any final thoughts or recommendations.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION/FIELD EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

1. Students are expected to meet the performance standards and learning objectives set by the program and the field supervisor once arrangements for an active learning situation have been completed.
2. Students must comply with all federal, State, and local employment regulations when applicable.
3. Any employment difficulties or misunderstandings need to be reported immediately by the student involved to the faculty cooperative education/field experience advisor. This faculty person will try to work through these concerns with you and your field supervisor.
4. Students are expected not to quit without prior consultation with their faculty cooperative education/field experience advisor who will negotiate any needed arrangements with the field supervisor.
5. Prolonged illnesses keeping one away from the job more than five consecutive calendar days should be reported to your faculty advisor.
6. Students have no special time-off privileges. Any requests for time off for such things as job interviews, emergency home situations, and the like must be cleared through one’s employer.
7. Students who are involuntarily terminated or laid off from their field placements need to notify their faculty cooperative education/field experience advisor immediately.
8. Students are responsible for costs of room, board, travel, and personal expenses during the field placement period.
9. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner.