

Co-op for Higher Education – A Pilot Proposal

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What is a Co-op?

- Undergraduate students complete at least one semester of core courses, then alternate between school semesters and work semesters
 - Work time = 30-50% of academic study time
- During work semesters, students are FTEs at participating employers - can relocate as needed
- Universities facilitate match-making, logistics
- Students expected to graduate in 5 years with up to 2 years of full-time employment experience across multiple employers

Proven success of similar programs

- University of Waterloo – Waterloo, Canada
- 19,000 co-op students with >7,000 participating employers
- Region had only 50 tech firms in 1997 - now >1,000 that collectively generate ~\$37 billion in annual revenue
- Google, SAP, other tech companies have built large local offices to access Waterloo students
- Waterloo is 2nd biggest supplier of Silicon Valley talent despite being 3000 miles away
 - Most eventually return, many start companies

Waterloo Alternating Semester Schedule

- 4 years of school, 2 years of work completed in under 5 years
- Doubles campus capacity with two tracks
- Students can relocate anywhere for work semesters – not limited to school region

Cohort	Fall Yr1	Spring Yr1	Summer Yr1	Fall Yr2	Spring Yr2	Summer Yr2	Fall Yr3	Spring Yr3	Summer Yr3
A	School	Work	School	Work	School	Work	School	Work	School
B	School	School	Work	School	Work	School	Work	School	Work



Cohort	Fall Yr4	Spring Yr4	Summer Yr4	Fall Yr5	Spring Yr5	Total school	Total work	Total to completion
A	Work	School	Work	School	School	8 semesters	6 semesters (2 years)	<5 years
B	School	Work	School	Work	School	8 semesters	6 semesters (2 years)	<5 years

Other examples

- University of Cincinnati – 1800 co-op students across 45 majors with >1500 participating employers
 - 95 percent of co-op students have jobs immediately upon graduation
- Oregon – MECOP (Multiple Engineering Co-op Program)
 - Oregon State, Portland State, Oregon Tech and Univ. of Portland participate
 - 5 year degree, two 6-month placements
 - ~150 participating employers
- Drexel – 1600 employers – students do 3 work terms of 6 months each
 - average work term pay is \$16k

Vision for Co-op in Idaho

- Centralized coordination point for employers
- Students from multiple schools have access to co-op job listings
- Program is aligned across all universities / colleges
- Coordinator (probably within higher ed or SBOE) recruits participating employers, facilitates interview and hiring process
- Program specifics are designed with input from industry, universities
- Consider pilot in limited discipline area(s) – if successful expand to be fully multi-disciplinary

Benefit to business community

- Access to recruits, especially from distant universities
 - E.g. U of I, ISU students can work for Boise employers during co-op semesters
- Workforce development – attract top students to Idaho universities/employers and integrate them into Idaho companies
- Predictability – employers can create and fill meaningful FTE positions with established duties rather than odd-job internships with limited, erratic hours
- Magnet for new business investment and start-ups

Benefit to students

- Ability to work anywhere in the state
- No need to balance school with work
- Top-quality, career-relevant jobs lined up
- Pay for school
 - Waterloo model – students generally graduate debt-free with all expenses covered as they go
- Better understanding of relevance of classwork
- Opportunity to sample different jobs / employers / locations
- Graduate with vastly better workplace skills, higher earning potential, better job opportunities

Benefit to Idaho

- Attract smart, successful students to Idaho universities
- Enhance reputation of Idaho's universities and technology sector
- Generate top-quality workers in high-demand field
- Encourage growth of higher-wage companies