

# FACULTY GUIDE

## Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services

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The goal of both faculty and the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services' staff is student career success. By working together, we can ensure a seamless transition from RIT student to influential member of the work force.

Our department supplements and supports your efforts and offers other specific services to students and alumni in direct support of their employment and career development concerns.

### Some of our key office services include:

- **We help your students find the right fit**—We help student access information related to their career path and develop essential job-search skills. We are a student's best resource for job outlook, company profiles, salary, and employment trend information.
- **We know employers who want to know you**—At the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services, we work directly with employers, who often ask for the contact information of faculty members who could help them to target students in a particular major or discipline. Ideally, employers would like to develop mutually beneficial relationships with faculty, and can provide many forms of support. We can facilitate that connection. We also have resources to help faculty understand their ethical responsibilities toward students. (See "Advice to Faculty About Ethical and Legal Standards in Student Hiring" section on page 3).
- **We develop job opportunities**—Our staff works with employers to develop relationships that result in hiring our co-op, graduating students and alumni. These job opportunities are available to students and alumni online through a password-protected searchable database called RIT Job Zone.
- **Our career fairs attract many recruiters to one event**—Our career fairs provide excellent opportunities for your students to meet representatives from the companies in their industries of choice and establish a network of contacts. We will help your students research the employers beforehand and provide tips so they are prepared to effectively engage recruiters. We host two major career fairs – a fall and a spring fair open to all students and alumni, as well as a number of specialized fairs throughout the year. Employers use our fairs to speak with candidates for co-op and full-time opportunities and connect with faculty.
- **We connect with students and alumni**—Each academic major is assigned a program coordinator to work with them achieve their career goals. Consequently, you have a specific point of contact in our office for any questions or concerns regarding students in your academic department.
- **We help students master the job interview**—There is no better way to prepare for the job interview than by experiencing an "actual" interview. At the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services, our staff or recruiter volunteers will conduct mock (or practice) interviews with your students, and then provide a constructive critique of their performance and suggest effective interview strategies.
- **We'll bring the information to your class**—We specialize in conducting presentations to the classes you teach and the student organizations you advise about a host of career-related topics, such as resume writing, job-search strategies, and interviewing skills. In addition, we often arrange presentations by professionals (many of them alumni), who can relate their experiences and how their education has helped them in their careers. We also can help out in a pinch: If you need to, or are considering canceling a class, just contact us and we can schedule a presentation instead.
- **We assist in identifying quality cooperative education opportunities**—Experiential education is such an important part of your students' overall educational experience. Just ask any employer. Through our network of employers, we can help your students identify cooperative education opportunities that will best serve them in their academic and professional pursuits.
- **We communicate with students**—Through targeted e-mails and student electronic newsletters. We also meet with individual students on an appointment basis. Students can simply call our office to set this up, same day appointments are an option. Every day we offer Walk In Hours in our office and in many academic buildings where students can stop by with a quick question.
- **We are focused internationally**—We are working on establishing contacts to assist students in obtaining meaningful work experiences overseas—many that may be used for co-op credit. For example, we are partnering with CDS to help students find

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employment in Germany. Students have the opportunity meet with our Assistant Director for International Outreach one-on-one to discuss their plans and get advice. If you have any questions about working abroad or can provide any leads for overseas employment, please contact us.

- **We provide graduate school advisement**—We serve as the central location for graduate school information on campus, we offer graduate school info sessions throughout the year and have an advisor responsible for meeting with students who need information about and guidance through the grad school process. We host a graduate school fair on campus every fall quarter. A number of books are available in our resource library in the Bausch & Lomb Center in addition to information accessible through our site.
- **We work closely with other RIT units**—Our office has very close and positive working relationships with other key RIT units including the Development Office, Sponsored Research Services, Alumni Affairs, the Counseling Center, First Year Experience Program, Honors and Study Abroad. We also interact closely with our career services colleagues at NTID in supporting the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students.
- **We collect data**—Salary data (along with names of employing organizations) is gathered from co-op and graduating students. We make this grouped data available through our web site to prospective students, current students and alumni. Employers also have access and often consider this data before extending job offers to co-op and graduating students.
- **Access faculty portal page**—As a valued faculty partner you can request an account to access a portion of our site developed with you in mind. It includes co-op evaluations, co-op work reports (if applicable) and many of the resources we offer RIT students such as, RIT Job Zone. To request an account follow the faculty link on our main page [www.rit.edu/co-op/careers](http://www.rit.edu/co-op/careers)

## How you can help us:

It is important for all faculty and staff at RIT to support the institute's goal of career education for a lifetime. You can do so by helping us with the following:

- Direct students with questions about co-op or job search services to our office.
- Forward to us job leads so that we can give students or alumni equal access to job openings. We can also establish long-term relationships with employers and communicate regularly with them.
- Help us publicize programming and services.
- Review marketing materials to ensure accurate information about academic programs and student competencies.
- Invite us to participate in appropriate department and college programs, meetings, and events where our perspectives and experiences can be helpful to and supportive of your efforts.

## Cooperative education at RIT

### **RIT is a World Leader in Cooperative Education**

For nearly 100 years, the hallmark of an RIT education has been the practical, paid work experience provided through cooperative education. RIT was among the first universities to begin cooperative education back in 1912, and today our co-op program is the fourth oldest and one of the largest in the world.

More than 3,300 students complete more than 5,000 co-op assignments last year and are employed by more than 2,000 employers coast-to-coast and overseas. Co-op is one of the most effective means for employers to identify and acquire key talent – few institutions have done it as well and as long as RIT. RIT's extensive experience and resources allow us to successfully meet the needs of nearly all types of employing organizations.

At RIT, tuition is not charged for the quarters students are employed as a co-op student. Employers pay a full-time salary. We gather co-op salary data, by program, and make it available to employers to assist them in setting a competitive pay range. Last year, RIT co-op students earned more than \$40 million. Many students find that their co-op earnings can go a long way toward helping them finance their RIT education.

## Other forms of experiential education

### Academic Internships

A number of academic programs offer experiential education opportunities such as internships. We often join forces with faculty to help students identify supervised practical training experiences appropriate for academic credit.

### Freelance Opportunities

Employers seeking talented students for project work may ask for assistance in communicating freelance opportunities to students.

### Other Types of Opportunities

Additionally we support the university's growing interest in developing undergraduate research experiences for students as well as identifying senior seminar and other class-based project ideas and sponsors. The RIT Student Employment Office is also part of our department so there are several opportunities for students to pursue part-time on- and off-campus employment to assist in broadening their skills and experiences.

## Advice to faculty about ethical and legal standards in student hiring

The success of students in obtaining employment is important to a number of parties on the college campus. In addition to the students themselves, these parties include the professionals who work in the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services and in admissions, development, and alumni relations offices, and you, the faculty.

You play a direct role in the employment process for new graduates. Usually, your role and that of the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services program coordinator are complementary. Occasionally, however, helping students in their job searches can result in unanticipated illegal or unethical actions.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), to which a great number of academic and hiring institutions belong, provides a set of ethical standards for guiding the job-search process. Entitled *Principles for Professional Conduct for Career Services & Employment Professionals*, these standards are based on notions of fairness, truthfulness, non-injury, confidentiality, and lawfulness. In its foreword, the *Principles* document notes that colleges and employers share the common goal of "achieving the best match between the individual student and the employing organization."

Three basic precepts serve as the foundation of this goal, namely:

- Maintaining an open and free selection of employment opportunities in an atmosphere conducive to objective thought, where job candidates can choose optimum long-term uses of their talents that are consistent with personal objectives and all relevant facts;
- Maintaining a recruiting process that is fair and equitable to candidates and employing organizations;
- Supporting informed and responsible decision making by candidates.

Because of the role you play in the hiring process, and the influence you have with both students seeking jobs and employers seeking new talent, NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) has created guidelines to assist you.

### Guidelines

- **Candidate Referral**

Employers may contact you to request the names of students who would be excellent candidates for job opportunities. At first glance, it seems harmless to provide the names of your best students. However, there are some potential legal and ethical pitfalls. If you or a colleague receive a job lead from an employer and choose only to refer a few individuals without publicizing the position to all students who may be qualified, you are not maintaining "a fair and equitable recruiting process."

Also, by identifying individuals for employment on a "regular" basis, you may be considered an "employment agency" for purposes of compliance with equal employment opportunity laws. For example, if it appears as if you are (innocently or otherwise) referring only male students or only minority students, you may be open to charges of discrimination.

Employers who act in accordance with the *Principles* understand and expect students to receive open and equal access to information about job opportunities.

**A Suggested Course of Action:** If you receive a request for student referrals, you can, of course, notify individual students who have declared an interest in such positions and encourage them to apply. However, also post the position in your department and announce it to your classes. At the same time, contact the RIT Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services so that the position can be listed campus-wide. There are practical reasons for these actions. The Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services may have an existing relationship with the requesting employer through co-op, career fair, or other recruiting programs. Or, the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services practitioners may wish to develop a broader relationship with the employer. Sometimes unproductive misunderstandings occur when an employer works with more than one campus office.

- **Referral of Minority Candidates**

Most employers have diversity objectives in their college relations programs. Accordingly, they will make a special effort to identify and attract minority candidates. You will probably be asked for help in accomplishing this task.

The NACE *Principles* document endorses compliance with EEO guidelines and adherence to affirmative action principles by both college and staffing professionals. It is illegal to discriminate against protected groups. It is considered appropriate for Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services practitioners to inform members of protected groups about employment opportunities, especially in areas where minorities are underrepresented. Similarly, employers are encouraged to inform minority populations of special activities, e.g., information sessions or career fairs that have been developed to help achieve an employer's affirmative action goals. You can participate in all of these activities.

While it is lawful and ethical for you to assist employers in reaching out to minority groups, it is inappropriate for you to identify only minority individuals who might fit the needs of an organization. You have an obligation to provide a "fair" system, i.e., one where all students have access to information about career opportunities.

**A Suggested Course of Action:** If you receive a request for minority candidate referrals, you can make announcements in class, post signs in your department, notify minority students' organizations (e.g., societies of black, female, or Hispanic engineers), pass the request on to the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services, and encourage the employer to contact the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services directly. You can also refer the employer to RIT's Northstar Center for Academic Success & Cultural Affairs. They may be authorized to provide a full list of the members of a requested population.

- **Providing References**

When you are asked by an employer for a student's reference, confidentiality becomes a major concern. Simply, information about a student should not be shared unless the student has furnished you with prior authorization. Once permission has been obtained, you should provide information that is based on facts, not conjecture, and not on personal information unrelated to the student's qualifications for the job in question.

**A Suggested Course of Action:** When you are asked to provide a written or oral reference for a student, obtain written permission from the student. All reference information should be based on firsthand knowledge and, if possible, written documentation. When providing information, you should avoid personal matters (e.g., marital status, health, disabilities, race, religion, etc.) that by law should not be included in employment decisions, even if you believe that such information might enhance the student's candidacy.

- **Final Comments**

The goal of student employment is most likely reached when all parties involved work cooperatively, ethically, and within the law. There may be instances when you are unsure of how to help your students and stay within the law. On those occasions, call the Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services for more information.

You and your colleagues are encouraged to offer comments to your Office of Cooperative Education and Career Services program coordinators regarding these guidelines and the issues this guide addresses.

*The source for Ethical and Legal Standards in Student Hiring is from the National Association of Colleges and Employers*  
<http://www.nacweb.org/public/faculty.htm>

## Tips for writing letters of recommendations

1. Prior to providing a reference, obtain consent from the person about whom the reference will be given. If you are unaware that the job applicant has named you as a reference, ask the prospective employer for verification that the individual has given consent for the reference. Such verification could include a copy of the student's signed application listing you as a reference, your name listed as a reference on the student's resume, or verbal confirmation by the student to you.
2. Discuss the type of reference that you will provide with the person who asks you to be a reference. If you cannot provide a good reference, be honest with the individual. Don't promise a "glowing reference" and then provide merely a "glimmer."
3. Follow your organization's policy regarding providing a reference. If references are handled in a centralized fashion, advise the prospective employer that even though you may be named as a reference, your organization's policy prohibits you from providing the reference. Direct the employer to the appropriate person in the organization.
4. If "to whom it may concern" reference letters are requested, document that this is the type of reference requested and that the student or job applicant takes responsibility for disseminating the letters to the proper persons.
5. Respond to the specific inquiry about the student or job applicant. Direct the response to the particular person who requested the information.
6. Relate references to the specific position for which the person applied and to the work that the applicant will perform.
7. Informal lunch discussions or "off the record" telephone conversations with prospective employers regarding a person's performance should be avoided. There is no such thing as "off the record."
8. Information given should be factual, based upon personal knowledge/ observation of the person through direct contact with the person or obtained from the person's personnel record or student record.
9. Avoid giving personal opinions or feelings. If you make subjective statements or give opinions because they are requested, clearly identify them as opinions and not as fact. If you give an opinion explain the incident or circumstances on which you base the opinion.
10. Don't guess or speculate-if someone asks you questions regarding personal characteristics about which you have no knowledge, state that you have no knowledge.
11. State in a reference letter, "This information is confidential, should be treated as such, and is provided at the request of (name of student or applicant), who has asked me to serve as a reference." Statements such as these give justification for the communication and leave no doubt that the information was not given to hurt a person's reputation.
12. Do not include information that might indicate an individual's race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, citizenship status, sex (unless by the individual's name it is obvious), or marital status. Do not base an opinion of performance on stereotypes about an individuals, for instance "for a woman, she excels in math."
13. Document all information you release.

## Contact us

Our office is located on the main floor of the Bausch & Lomb Center (building 77). Our phone number is 585.475.2301, 585.475.6905 TTY. Our complete staff list, including assigned program areas can be found on through the Staff & Advisors link our site at [www.rit.edu/co-op/careers](http://www.rit.edu/co-op/careers).

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