

What is Co-op?

Cooperative Education, or co-op, gives you the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience before you graduate! Co-op is the keystone to RIT's experiential education options. It will help you further define your career path and fully realize the value of what you are learning in the classroom. The Computing Security Bachelor's degree requires satisfactory completion of two co-ops.

Cooperative education at RIT is full-time (35 hours or more per week), paid employment directly related to your field of study. The length of a co-op can be a single term or 2 consecutive terms. Visit the [Co-op Schedule](#) page for more details. Co-op begins after you have completed the first two years of coursework in your academic program, in most cases. Additionally, students must complete CSEC 99 Co-op Seminar prior to going out on co-op. Most students complete co-op in the summer after their second and third year. However, students are able to go on a co-op during the fall or spring academic semester. It is just recommended that students speak with their academic advisors to note any potential impacts this could create.

Cooperative education is a unique kind of education. It is different from summer employment, and different from an internship. Co-op employment is:

- Related to your field of study
- Full-time, productive work
- Paid
- Increases in complexity and challenge according to your academic level
- Includes formal evaluation and documentation of your performance

Co-op gives you the opportunity to:

- Apply much of the theory you are learning in your course work
- Experience a typical work day and focus your career choice
- Earn a reasonable salary which will help you finance your education
- Take a breather away from your "grind" as a student
- Develop additional technical skills and enhance vital personal skills such as judgment, written and oral communication, teamwork
- Make contacts (network) that may be helpful when you seek full-time employment
- Be a more attractive candidate for full-time employment after graduation and probably obtain a higher starting salary than students without co-op experience

Employers benefit from co-op in a number of ways:

- Co-op students are flexible, highly motivated, technical employees who join the work force at relatively low cost to the employer.
- Your presence can free up an employee's time for long-range projects.
- Your abilities and potential for permanent employment can be assessed on the job.
- Your new ideas and enthusiasm are often professionally stimulating to full-time employees.
- You serve as the employer's "good will ambassador" to other RIT students and faculty, facilitating recruiting and other relationships.

**How Financial Aid Works While You Are On Co-op**

RIT does not charge tuition for enrollment in cooperative education. With the exception of the federal Pell Grant, most forms of financial aid are not awarded for semesters of co-op employment. Financial aid includes federal and private alternative loans as well as grants and scholarships. If you have concerns pertaining to your living expenses during your co-op term, please contact your Financial Aid Counselor to discuss some various strategies as to how to cover these costs.

If you are a Pell grant recipient, the grant will credit to your student account after the drop/add period for the term. You must report your co-op, go to: <https://ocecsprod.ad.rit.edu/Forms/Coop/>. Log in and complete form. After your co-op has been verified, the Computing Security department will enroll you in CSEC 499 in SIS.

Your co-op earnings will not negatively impact your eligibility for federal student aid in the subsequent year. You are asked on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to report earnings from a co-op. The reported co-op earnings will automatically be excluded from your adjusted gross income when calculating your expected family contribution (EFC).

If you have any questions regarding your co-op earnings and financial aid, please contact your Financial Aid Counselor.

Housing During and After Co-op

Students who co-op in Rochester may stay in RIT housing. Students who co-op out of town are typically responsible for finding their own housing near the employer's location. Some companies provide housing assistance in the form of subsidies or housing allowances, or space in locations they own or rent for this purpose. Most employers will at least provide a list of apartments or housing options to assist students.

Students who return from co-op are guaranteed on-campus housing, ***if they were in RIT housing prior to leaving for co-op***, however, preferences are not guaranteed. RIT Housing Operations communicates with students via email and provides information on how to apply for housing when you return to campus.

International Students

International students need work authorization from RIT International Student Services and cannot co-op until after two consecutive full-time academic terms of study have been completed, minimally.

Co-op is considered Curricular Practical Training. Curricular Practical Training (CPT) must be in your field of study and an integral part of an established curriculum. To be eligible for curricular practical training you must have F-1 status, and have completed at least two terms of full-time study in the U.S. If you have any questions, please contact our CSEC Co-op Coordinator in the co-op office for clarification.

As soon as an offer of employment is accepted, but at least one week before employment begins:



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- Notify the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education. You will need to complete and submit the [Report Your Co-op online form](#) and provide the information requested.
- Work with the CSEC to have your co-op registered in SIS (we will need to wait for the co-op office to verify the co-op, typically takes 24-48 hours after you report the co-op).
- Make an appointment to see an international student advisor to obtain work authorization. Bring your I-20 and offer of employment to the appointment. Make sure your offer letter clearly states a start and end date as well as the address where you will be working.

You may be authorized for whatever amount of curricular practical training your degree requires; however, you will be ineligible for optional practical training at the end of your studies if the number of authorized CPT days exceed 364 days.

Eligibility

Undergraduate Students must be in good academic standing, completed their first two years of academics, and CSEC 99 Co-op Seminar. Students must complete their required two co-ops prior to their last year of academic coursework.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Are students guaranteed a co-op job? No. Students are not placed into a co-op position, but rather they apply and go through the same hiring process they will when they look for a job after graduation (which is great practice). But, remember the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education does guarantee we will help students in any way we can with your search. By being flexible on their expectations and fully utilizing the resources available, students will become skilled in successfully conducting their job search.

Q: Do students receive credit for co-op? Standard academic credit is not given for co-op. However, the Computing Security department does assign a grade of "S" when/if a student has met all of their requirements and have successfully completed their co-op assignment. Two enrolled co-ops with a grade of "S" is required to graduate from the B.S. in Computing Security.

Q: Do students pay tuition for co-op? Students do not pay tuition or any university fees while on co-op even though you remain eligible to utilize all the facilities and services of the university.

Q: How do students let RIT know where they will be working? Students [report your co-op online](#) to the Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education. Click on the "Report Your Co-op/Internship" link. Students also need to be register for co-op in SIS. For Computing Security students, their home department will enroll them after they report their co-op and we have verified they meet all the requirements to be enrolled.

Q: How much do students get paid? It is ultimately up to the employer, but they often base it upon comparable co-op salaries and a candidate's experience. There may be room for negotiation. The employer also determines eligibility for benefits, if any. Check the Co-op Office's website for the latest co-op salary data.

Q: What type of work qualifies for co-op? An acceptable co-op position is defined as:

- Related to your field of study
- Full-time, productive work
- Paid
- Increases in complexity and challenge according to your academic level
- Includes formal evaluation and documentation of your performance

Q: What is the length of a co-op? A single co-op block is the same length as an academic term. Students may, in fact, work longer -- depending on their exam schedule the preceding term and on their employer's needs. A double block is two consecutive terms of work, without a break in between. Many students are scheduled for double blocks, others may choose to double block. (To see if/how a double block could impact their graduation timeline, students need to check with their academic advisors before committing to a double block). The student and the employer negotiate the start date and the expected end date of the work period.

Q: Can a student stay in Rochester? Maybe. Some co-op jobs are located in the Rochester area. Depending upon the students program, there may be many or very few positions in Rochester. Competition for these positions can be very high. It is not advisable to limit one's job search to any one specific area. The student will enhance their chances of landing a professionally rewarding position if they are geographically flexible. They should seriously consider all co-op opportunities in their career field for which they qualify, regardless of location.

Q: Where will the student live if they leave Rochester? Many out-of-town employers provide some help in finding temporary housing. The assistance varies: some companies will provide a list of possible apartments and room rentals; some will pay for a hotel for a few days while the student is looking; some have co-op housing already arranged. It is a good idea to check with the colleges in the area because residence hall space is frequently available, especially in the summer. It is appropriate to discuss your housing concerns with an employer once an offer has been made.

Q: Can a student work overseas? Yes, but start early! Visit the Co-op Office's [International Experience](#) page for more information.

Q: Will the employer pay their relocation expenses? Maybe. Some employers, especially those located out of state, will pay for all or part of a student's relocation expenses. It is important to have a clear understanding of the student's obligation before accepting a co-op position if extensive travel expenses are anticipated.

Q: Do students have to pay taxes on what they earn? Yes. According to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service salaries/wages paid to co-op students are fully subject to applicable federal income taxes. They are also subject to applicable state income taxes. Any type of personal income should be assumed taxable unless IRS regulations specifically declare it to be "excludable" (i.e., tax-exempt). There is no exclusion of co-op wages in current regulations.

International students are required to pay federal and state income taxes but not FICA (social security tax). It should be understood that the above information/advice is provided only as a



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convenience for students and is not legally binding. Students seeking further info should contact the Internal Revenue Service.

Q: Can I collect unemployment insurance? Once a student's co-op employment with a company has ended, they are not eligible to collect unemployment insurance benefits.

Q: What if student do not get a co-op job? Students should see their career services coordinator as soon as they feel anxious about their co-op job search. We can evaluate their search, make suggestions, and provide additional service that will assist them in meeting their goal.

Q. Can a student co-op after they graduate? No. Once a student has completed all their degree requirements they are no longer eligible for RIT's co-op program. Co-op is part of their experiential education while they are studying at RIT. Additionally, a student must complete their two required co-ops before their last academic semester at RIT.