

## 12 STEPS FOR EVALUATING CO-OP/INTERNSHIP OFFERS

*A self-directed approach that allows you to come to the best decision possible when considering a Co-op or Internship offer.*

(Steps 1-3 are best done BEFORE pursuing a Co-op/Internship position.)

- \_\_\_ **Step 1:** Develop a list of skills, abilities and interests that you possess and are interested in using. See the self-assessment exercises in *MOVING ON* to get started.
- \_\_\_ **Step 2:** Have a clear career goal that you'd like to pursue. Identify what successful people in this field need to know, need to be able to do. See Occupational Information available in the Career Library and/or visit your Career Consultant.
- \_\_\_ **Step 3:** Based on your responses to Steps 1 and 2 above, develop a list of the skills and abilities that you want to learn in a Co-op/Internship experience.
- \_\_\_ **Step 4:** Get a detailed position description (ideally in writing), including the responsibilities of the position, the resources that you will use to complete your work, the environment that you will work in, the people with whom you will be working, who your supervisor will be, etc.
- \_\_\_ **Step 5:** ASK THE EMPLOYER: "What sort of training do you offer your Co-ops/Interns?" Get specifics in terms of the length of training, the resources used in training, the opportunities to apply what you learn in training to your work, etc.
- \_\_\_ **Step 6:** ASK THE EMPLOYER: "How much exposure to top executives, other managers, and other professionals in the field will I have?" Again, get specifics and understand the importance of networking. Through Co-op and Internships, you may be able to establish contacts that will shape your career in the years to come.
- \_\_\_ **Step 7:** ASK THE EMPLOYER: "What kind of company/agency-wide orientation do Co-ops/Interns receive?" A solid experience will allow you to see and understand how your role fits into the overall structure of the organization.
- \_\_\_ **Step 8:** ASK THE EMPLOYER: "How will this experience help me to realize my career goal of ...(state career goal as identified in Step 2)?" Again, get specifics.
- \_\_\_ **Step 9:** Talk to students who have worked as a Co-op or Intern for this organization. Ask them what they liked most about their experience and what they liked the least. Your Career Consultant and or/Faculty Advisor may be able to put you in touch with these students. Remember that everyone will have their own unique experience – don't let the experience of one person alone shape your decision to accept or reject an offer.
- \_\_\_ **Step 10:** Compare what you know about the position, using information gathered in Steps 4-9, to the list you developed in Step 3. How well does the position meet the goals that you set for yourself?
- \_\_\_ **Step 11:** Develop a list of "Pros and Cons" about accepting a particular position, weighing each item in terms of its importance to your current situation and future career goals. Don't discount a position simply because of a far away location or a low salary. Recognize the importance of experience related to your career goal in securing more professional positions and negotiating higher salaries in the future.
- \_\_\_ **Step 12:** Write down what you want to learn from this particular experience – i.e., a list of specific skills and knowledge areas that you plan on developing through a particular Co-op/Internship – and present it to the employer when you accept the position. If you and the employer come to an agreement, then the list in essence becomes a statement of understanding between the two of you that can be used to frame the rest of your experience.