MAKING THE SYSTEM WORK FOR YOU

A Guide to Cooperative Education

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To LaGuardia's first freshmen, welcome! You are embarking with us on an exciting experiment in higher education. LaGuardia, as you know, is the only community college in the country where all students are on coop. The program is an attempt to combine practical and theoretical learning. It's an attempt to give you the tools to decide your own future -- to learn how to function in the big corporate world (if you want to); to learn what you want to do. That's why we've titled this handbook "Making the System Work for You." We hope you use the handbook and the program in that way.

DIVISION OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

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CONTENTS

1 Achieving
2 Brains, Brawn and Bridges
3 Co-Options I
4 Co-Options II
5 Coordinators and Coop Advisors
6 Changing Patterns (A or B)
7 Calendar
8 Division of Cooperative Education
9 Development
10 Education
11 Fair-Haired Boy
12 Fired!
13 Getting Prepared
14 Getting Placed
15 Grades
16 Hair!
17 Interviewing
18 Internship Coordinator
19 Internships
20 Job Descriptions
21 Keeping in Touch
22 Liberal Arts?
23 Library/Lounge
24 Money
25 No Job?
26 Own Job?
27 Practicum
28 Questions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Social Security Numbers, Taxes 'n Things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Student Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Uncertainty and Usefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Vacations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Waivers, Exemptions, Exceptions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Xanadu, Yahoo and Zuper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Achieving

Who am I? What do I want to do? What do I do best?

By having a chance to try your hand at something, you can get a better idea. Before you "coop," you assess yourself. You think, you aim, you set some goals. Then you do something and see how it jibes with what you've been studying and planning.

"Getting it all together" for you is LaGuardia's idea of achievement. And Coop is LaGuardia's "secret weapon" to help you do it.
Brains, Brawn, and Bridges

Basically everything is connected. What you study, what you read, what you think is linked to what you do. You learn by doing, and to do more you have to learn more. (There's math in fixing cars or winding up a sale; there's psychology in being a doctor, and politics in working in any big company.) If, while you're studying to be a secretary or a manager, you have experience in a large organization, then you know "what it's really like" sooner. Cooperative education is itself a bridge between practice and theory. And it helps you find the right bridges for you faster.
Options

Coop offers many advantages.

1. It is a way to see what you are studying in action.

2. If you are a career student, you will be able to work at the field you have been studying (for example an accounting student may be an accounting assistant).

3. You will be able to see much of your liberal arts learnings in operation (e.g., the sociology of a large organization). Whether you have decided on your career or not, you will have the opportunity to find out what your skills are, what you do best.

4. You will have the opportunity to explore careers. You may choose to:

   -- stay at the same basic job for three* internships and assume increasing skill and responsibility on that job, perhaps joining the firm after graduation;

   -- move around a little, trying different assignments in the same firm or trying the same job in different firms;

   -- explore two or three very different kinds of jobs.

5. You will have the opportunity to earn money while learning.

*See Internships
The basic coop educational plan is three paid jobs developed for you by the Division of Cooperative Education. But maybe you have another idea.

Maybe you have a job now which you would like to turn into an internship. Or maybe you can track down the job you want on your own. In either case, that's great! See your coop advisor to get his help and his approval that the placement meets internship standards.

Perhaps you have a special interest in an area for which it is difficult-to-impossible to obtain a paid position (e.g., working on a political campaign or working with deaf children). Coop now has some very interesting but non-paying positions. If you are willing to take a non-paying position, Coop will help you find one to meet your interests.

Or perhaps you have your own special idea -- working on an Indian reservation in the West or an archeological dig in Greece or developing your own business or ??? Coop calls these internships "alternate placements" and has particular procedures and stipulations. To receive coop credit for such a placement, you must:

1. Obtain from your coop advisor a petition form;
2. Complete the petition, describing your proposed internship and showing that (a) it has educational and vocational value, and (b) you will be supervised and your performance and the experience can be evaluated;
3. Submit the petition to the Division where it will be reviewed and acted on by a panel of three coop staff.

You have the right to appeal the decision of the panel to the Dean of Cooperative Education.

*See Internships*
Coordinators and Coop Advisors

"Coordinator" is the rather weird title given to staff members of the Division of Cooperative Education! (The history of the title is elusive, but we do know that they do coordinate the off-campus and on-campus experiences.) You will be assigned a coordinator as your coop advisor (who will also be a member of your advisory hour team). The coop advisor will be the person responsible for seeing that you meet all the prerequisites for placement and, if you fulfill them, that you are placed on an internship.* Your coop advisor is your friend, your employment agent, your career counselor, your supervisor! (Know him and love him!) Direct all questions about coop to your coop advisor.

*See also Internship Coordinator
Students are placed randomly in the A or B placement pattern during their first quarter at LaGuardia. During that quarter, changes may be made by obtaining a petition and submitting the completed petition to the Division of Cooperative Education before the registration period. The Division will attempt to honor requests for changes, but it must keep the numbers of students in each pattern in each major evenly balanced.

*Secretarial students are assigned to A or B according to whether they are in advanced or beginning courses.
You probably know it, but as a reminder -- you are required to complete three internships for graduation. You will be placed in either the A or B pattern and, accordingly, will follow this calendar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freshman Year</th>
<th>Sophomore Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B</td>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Division of Cooperative Education is one of the four major areas of the College. (The others are the Divisions of Instruction, Student Development, and Administration.) The Division is headed up by the Dean of Cooperative Education and includes a Director of Cooperative Education, several coordinators and other staff. (See page i for list and location of staff members.)
Development

Growth and development are key to education. Each internship should reflect your own intellectual and professional development. You should be progressing and doing more sophisticated or different tasks with each internship. You may begin with simple tasks and gradually do more complex ones. Your work at each level is essential. It's a gradual but important process. (Neither Rome nor bank presidents were built in a day!)
Education is another key word.

Coop is first and foremost an educational process -- not a job, not a way to make a lot of money. It's a way of learning off-campus. It's an opportunity to put into practice what you've learned in class -- and then to come back to classes to fill in the gaps in knowledge.
Boy

"How do I do well?"

Ideally, you will have selected your internship carefully and been well-matched. You will know what is expected of you and what you expect from the position. You will not only meet the agency's standards of dress, neatness, punctuality, and general rules, but you will be energetic and eager, ask questions, show initiative and imagination. You will, in short, be giving as much as you can and, in turn, getting as much as you can from the experience.
Fired! "But what if I get fired?"

... 

Hopefully, you won't. Hopefully, you will have made a good choice, be well prepared for the position, and will give it your all. If, however, any problems develop, call your internship coordinator immediately! He will try to help you work out the problems. If the two of you have tried together and both agree that the placement is unworkable, then the coordinator will make special provisions for you.*

*If, on the other hand, you did not contact your coordinator, or were fired for genuine uncooperativeness on your part, then you will receive an N.C. for the term. (See Grades.)
Getting Prepared

Proper preparation and placement are key to being successful on the internship. Coop has developed a pre-placement program for the term prior to your first internship, which includes several requirements:

1. You must attend five required sessions held during advisory hours.
2. You must develop a resume.
3. You must go through a practice interview satisfactorily.
4. You must meet individually with your coop advisor by a date that will be announced.
5. You must demonstrate that you
   -- have assessed your abilities and interests,
   -- have thought systematically and made a positive choice about your internship,
   -- have met the necessary academic requirements* and skills for the internship you wish to pursue,
   -- understand the nature and obligations of the LaGuardia program.

During the first four weeks of the term, prior to your first internship, you will develop a resume, do practice interviewing, and discuss all aspects of the program. In the fifth week, Coop will issue a list of all the internships. The lists will be discussed in the advisory hour.

*Successful completion of 8 credits is required in all cases to go out on the first internship.
Getting Placed

First you must study the list of available internships and decide which interest you. Then, make an appointment with your coop advisor (no later than the seventh week of the term prior to your internship).

In your meeting with your advisor, you will discuss whether you have met all the requirements for placement. (See Getting Prepared.) If you have done so satisfactorily, you and your coordinators will begin to discuss internships. When you and your coordinator have jointly agreed on specific positions which fit your interests and abilities, your coordinator will formally refer you to the coop coordinator who has developed the particular internship.

That coordinator will screen you for the job and judge if you are a good candidate. You will be able to ask questions about the position and decide if it is the one you are most interested in. If you both agree that the internship is for you, you will be formally referred to the employer.

Once given a referral slip to the employer, you must telephone him and arrange an appointment. If you and the employer both agree that this would be a good position for you, then you have obtained your internship.* Report this information to your coop advisor on the form he has provided you. If, in interviewing with the firm, you decide that you don't like the position (or the employer decides that about you), then report back to your coop advisor. Discuss your experience with him and begin to select another internship.

*You and the employer must both decide "yes" or "no" immediately, and are not allowed to ask to consider another prospect before deciding.
Satisfactory completion of three internships is required for the degree. You will receive three credits for each internship, or a total of nine credits. You will be graded on each internship according to the regular grading pattern: E, G, P, N.C. Your internship manager* will grade you, basing the grade on:

1. Your job supervisor's evaluation of your performance;
2. Your internship coordinator's own estimate;
3. Your performance in the practicum.**

You must receive at least a P in both the internship and the practicum components to earn a P for the term.

If you receive one N.C. grade, you can be placed again (according to your A or B pattern). You will, however, have to complete another internship satisfactorily to replace the one for which you received the N.C.

If you receive two N.C.'s, your case will be reviewed by a special committee procedure (to be established). This committee may determine to bar you from further placements and perhaps prevent you from graduating.

*See Internship Coordinator
**See Practicum
Hair! On what grounds do employers judge potential employees? Certainly on skills, background qualifications — but also on "attitude." "Attitude" is communicated to the employer not only by what you say, but how you present yourself. How do you hold yourself (straight or slouched)? Do you meet the firm's standards of neatness and dress? Firms do better in this respect, but most prefer a fairly conservative appearance (dresses and hose and clean, neat hair for women; jacket, tie, and short, neat hair for men). The internship manager who is responsible for the position will know the firm's expectations and be able to indicate just how much you have to have your hair cut if you want to be considered! (Whatever the atmosphere of the firm, you should dress conservatively for your interview.)
Interviewing is a critical part of the process of getting your internship. It is the time when the potential employer forms his impression of you - what you look like; how you come across; do you seem strong or weak, sharp or dull, confident or scared, directed or indifferent; do you know what you want to do and why you specifically want to work for him. Interviewing is very tough to do well. You have to "have your head together," and you have to have practice and confidence. In the preparatory term, Coop plans opportunities for you to watch interviews and to go through interviews yourself. You must be able to interview satisfactorily in a practice setting** before being sent out on a real interview.

*Clean hair, shoes, nails. Jacket and tie for men. Dress and hose for women. Neatnesss!

**Procedures will be described in your advisory hour.
Intern Coordinator

That's the coop coordinator who's developed your internship, knows the employer, and who will be responsible for you and be your advisor while you are on the internship. He may or may not be the same person who was your coop advisor in the term prior to the internship.
Internships

Where are they? What are they?

Coop has developed a wide range. Most are in New York City; some are outside, in the suburbs; a few are "out of town" and beyond commuting distance.

Most are with private, profit-making companies (banks, manufacturing firms, service industries, department stores). Some are in the non-profit section (hospitals, schools, foundations). A number are in City agencies. Several internships are right on-campus at LaGuardia.

Most are paid positions. A few are volunteer positions. Some are financed under the Federal College Work Study Program* and, for these, a student must meet certain eligibility requirements. Some are part of specific training programs in which the employer expects that the student will return for each of his internships.

*See your coop advisor to find out if you are eligible.
Job Descriptions

A list will be published of all positions by the fifth week of the term prior to your internship. The list will include the name and general location of the firm, the type of industry (e.g., banking) a short job title (e.g., accounting clerk) and a brief description. In your advisory hour, your coop advisor will further explain the format of the list.

For more information, see your coop advisor individually.
Keeping in Touch

While you're away... you are still a registered student. You will be coming back every other week for your practicum seminar. You should stay in touch with your internship coordinator to discuss your progress and any problems (before they perhaps become big!).

Pertinent information will be mailed to you throughout the term. Do plan to attend LaGuardia's social and cultural events.
So you're a liberal arts student! What's a liberal arts internship? Everything!

You have a wide choice of opportunities to select from:

- positions in business corporations where you can examine and explore careers and where you can see sociology,
- political science and economics in action;
- positions in the professions (e.g., teacher assistant);
- positions with museums, libraries, hospitals, and foundations.

In your internship you can consciously seek career opportunities and observe the implications of your studies.
Library/Lounge  Coop has a lovely little room nestled on the second floor, near all the coordinators' offices -- It is Room 257. It has couches and tables, and a small library of career information. The up-to-date list of internships will be posted there. Information about companies will be available there. If you want to make an appointment with, leave a message or wait for your coop advisor -- Room 257 is the place to do it!
"How much money can I earn on coop?"

Some, maybe a lot, maybe very little, while you're at LaGuardia, but, in the long run, probably a considerable amount. The internships developed were selected for their educational and training value. As much as possible you should choose your internship for how much you can learn and develop professionally from it — not whether it pays $5.00 per week more than another.

Think of your internships as investments. The real pay-off will be later.
No Job? It is possible that the College will be unable to find you an internship -- most unlikely, but possible. The current economic conditions are particularly difficult. And some students may simply have bad luck on interviews. If you have met all the prerequisites, Coop will make every effort to find you a placement. If the Division is unsuccessful, the Division will make special provisions for you.
Own Job? If you have your own job, perhaps your part-time job now, which you would like to keep and work at full-time for your internship, see your coop advisor immediately! He will help you do this.

If you have ideas or prospects of your own (particularly if you have highly specialized interests or skills) also see your coop advisor
The practicum seminar is one of the unique facets of LaGuardia's unique coop program. It is a seminar which will meet every other week during your internship, in non-working hours. It is a seminar which will be tailored to help you get as much as possible out of your internship. Faculty will be specially recruited to teach this unusual seminar in which you will be asked to do readings, oral reports, or other tasks carefully designed with your internship in mind.

With the advice of your coop advisor, you will be able to choose a practicum. (Registration for this will occur late in the term, after students have identified their internship.)

You will be graded* on the practicum. Attendance is expected. Successful performance in the practicum is necessary to receive a passing grade for the internship.

*See Grades
If you have 'em, don't repress 'em; express 'em!

Come to or contact your coop advisor or the Coop Division.
Registration

Going out on coop does funny things to a registration system. Because you are off-campus means that you really have to plan: you register two terms ahead of time. For example, freshman "A" students in February will register

-- for coop and for a related practicum --

in the spring quarter,

-- for the courses they will be taking when they return -- in the summer quarter.

(If it turns out that you change your mind during your internship and decide that Advanced Sanskrit will be more practical than Intermediate Karate, it will be possible to change your program when you return.)
Do you have a Social Security number? If not, see your coop advisor.

More information on income tax will be forthcoming.
Student participation in developing coop policy is encouraged. Currently there are two student members on the College-wide Cooperative Education Committee.

Meetings are open.
So you like the idea of getting away from Fun City? There are some possibilities to do that in coop. A few internships are out of town, and there will probably be more next year. You may also travel if you can propose an appropriate alternate placement. (See Co-Options II.)
Uncertainty and Usefulness

Some words to the wise: THINK POSITIVE! If you are uncertain about what you want to do, try identifying several things you like and then concentrating on finding an internship.

If you are uncertain about your skills or your decision, talk to someone. If you've spent a lot of time with your coop advisor, try your counselor or your faculty advisor. Don't be shy about saying you're not sure. All of us, in some way, are or have been!

If you are uncertain about your internship, if you even come to decide that you don't like it -- that's not so bad. You've probably learned a great deal in a short three months. You've learned what to avoid in the future. The usefulness of that is immeasurable!

Whatever your feelings about your internship, concentrate on its usefulness to you. What are you learning about your strengths and your weaknesses, how you get along with others, what skills you lack?
Vacations, admittedly, are not the outstanding feature of LaGuardia Community College. When you are employed, you must follow the holiday schedule of the firm (not of the College). You must work right through the last day before the next term (intensive week) of the College begins. When you are on study terms, you get regular College holidays and vacations, including the week at the end of the study term.
W aivers, Exemptions, Exceptions, Etc.

All students are required to complete three internships* and three related practicum seminars for the degree.

Credit for previous work experience may be obtained on formal application to the Division of Cooperative Education.

The Division will not obtain internships for students in the extended day program. With the approval of the Division, these students may substitute present or previous experience for the regular internship.

In all cases, all students are required to take three formal practicum seminars.

*See Co-Options II for discussion of alternative to regular internship.
Xanadu is a dream city; Yahoo is a cheer; and Super is a "type" (Super!) ... All the XYZ's of good internships ... and GOOD LUCK!