COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

FALL 2015

From the Director

by Maureen Barcic

Each fall season brings a new school year, but in our office it is filled with many traditions. We meet a new class of co-op applicants, host the co-op fair, and begin our search for the Co-op Student and Co-op Employer of the Year. The annual report is assembled and we reflect and try to improve. The fall term culminates in our annual recognition dinner for our graduating co-op students. It is a busy time!

This year we are very fortunate to have the return of Benedetta Khoury and we have added another graduate student, Scott Allen, to assist us. Both are working very hard by reaching out to the students and assisting with resume and job fair preparation. Once again our program showed growth, both in student and employer participation. We had well over 1,000 active students over the 2014-2015 year with almost 300 employers. Our students work from one end of the country to the other, and a few students experienced international assignments.

Fall is also a season of thankfulness, and Chris, LeeAnn, and I want to take a moment to thank everyone in the Swanson School of Engineering who supports us, especially our Senior Associate Dean Larry Shuman, as well as our co-op alumni, students, and employers, too!

Bombardier is moving people and moving up!

Bombardier Transportation, located in West Mifflin, Pa., is the global leader in the rail industry. The company’s focus ranges from the manufacture of trains to subsystems, to maintenance services and system integration and signaling. There are 59 production and engineering sites in 23 countries.

Our first co-op, Sheila Kingsley, began with Bombardier in the Fall of 2000 (ADTranz) as an industrial engineer. Sheila said that during her co-op she was exposed to everything from lean manufacturing on the shop floor to European travel for analysis work. Because ADTranz was not hiring when Sheila graduated, she accepted a position with General Motors (GM), where she was accepted into the Tool and Die Supervisor Program and earned a master’s degree in manufacturing operations from Kettering University. After seven years with GM, Sheila decided she wanted to return to Pittsburgh, Pa. She still knew several individuals at what is now Bombardier and accepted a position in project management. After a few well-earned promotions, Sheila is currently the site general manager and project manager at West Mifflin. One of Sheila’s goals is to promote co-op throughout Bombardier. Since 2011, we have had an ongoing relationship that is truly blossoming into something great!

Vince Falleroni co-oped with Mine Safety Appliances (MSA) in Murrysville, Pa. He really enjoys working with his hands, and that is what initially drew him to engineering. At MSA he began project work in lean manufacturing and capacity analysis. The co-op helped him connect the academics and upon graduation, Vince accepted a position with a manufacturing company. About a year and a half later, he accepted a position at Bombardier in the propulsion division. Vince said he had a great mentor and accepted a position as a senior methods engineer, where he worked on internal process improvement. Since then, Vince has accepted a new role and supervises the hardware engineering group. Vince acknowledges the versatility of these positions, but says that the co-op was instrumental in helping him bridge the gap between industry and academics.

From left to right: Joe Korenic, Sheila Kingsley, and Vince Falleroni

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As a student, he chose a variety of courses that would aid him in a manufacturing career. Vince, like Sheila, wants to see the co-op expanded into his area.

Joe Korenic, Pitt EE graduate in 1983 and current manager of Advance Engineering and the Power Lab, did not have the opportunity to co-op as the program was not established yet, but he relied heavily on the program now. In fact, he just hired two recent co-ops into full-time positions at Bombardier, but continues to budget for two co-ops each term to assist him in his business. He remains our most recent Bombardier intern and continues to budget for two co-ops each term to assist him in his business.

My International Experience

by Zhanetta Pieklovska

I enjoy being devoted to my work. Whether it is in painting, cleaning the house, or a co-op position, I believe I must do the best I can do or not do it at all.

“Our growth depends not on how many experiences we devour, but on how many we digest,” Ralph W. Sockman once said. This philosophy was that everyone should have at least a small understanding of office but also the philosophy of my manager, Cam Lopez. His philosophy was that everyone should have at least a small understanding of functions of other departments to be able to sufficiently contribute to projects. Therefore, I was introduced to quite a number of engineering aspects. Throughout the semester I worked with circuit board layout, FPGA, soft microcontrollers, demo systems, simulation, hardware and software testing, and much more. This experience became a solid engineering base and helped me discover what I wanted to do with computer engineering. At the end of every co-op rotation students put together a presentation to share their accomplishments with managers; this was a wonderful chance to make an impression and create connections. On presentation day, I was approached about working under a different manager in Cleveland, Ohio, for my next rotation. I accepted the position and after a short school semester, I was working in Cleveland, Ohio, under David Melnik. Immediately I knew it would be a different experience because the office was much bigger and the products were different. My new job duties included debugging and developing firmware for embedded systems, investigating hardware problems, and integrating hardware changes. My manager was especially helpful, always making sure I enjoyed projects and giving me advice for my future career. Furthermore, being a larger company location, we had thirteen co-ops, which allowed us to work on fun projects together such as organizing a fundraiser for a local children’s hospital. We had a great time organizing raffles, bake sales, and pumpkin-carving contests. Around this time I met another student that had co-op ed in ABB-Germany; I was immediately excited to try to do so myself. I looked for suitable positions abroad and spoke to my manager and the human resources department. I was later informed there was a chance I could work with a team in Genoa, Italy.

Reflections

by Jordan Drischler

I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience as a co-op for US Airways and the new American Airlines. My engineering mentor was a very experienced and knowledgeable engineer who cared about the careers of young engineers. He was a great guide as I learned what it was like to be an engineer in the workforce. He provided me with a lot of valuable information and taught me a lot. He also gave me a lot of responsibility to take on projects myself and make them my own. When I started my co-op experience in the spring of 2014, I learned the ropes of engineering and the airline industry. By my third work rotation, I was practically working as a project engineer.

American Airlines has made their co-op program a priority and it is encouraging to be a part of a company that truly values their co-ops. I was recently able to travel to the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport where I presented what I had accomplished as a co-op to senior management. It was an honor to have several senior managers take the time to meet with co-op students. During the presentations, the vice president of engineering expressed that it is the goal of the airline to hire their co-ops to full-time positions. I would very much like to be provided with an opportunity for full-time employment with American Airlines, as I have grown so much as an engineer during my time there. It is an industry and a company I could see myself working at during my career.

“I would recommend BMW to anyone in a heartbeat. They are awesome and I am so happy to be working there. You have to be motivated to succeed, and have the drive (get it?) to accomplish whatever you set your sights on. Not everyone is up for it, but those that are would love it here. There is a position for every major as long as you can communicate your passion.”

Alex Rosenbaum

BMW
Nominations Open for Co-op Student of the Year and Employer of the Year

The co-op program is fortunate to have strong employer partners and smart, capable students. The Co-op Student of the Year and the Co-op Employer of the Year awards recognize the time, effort, and hard work both parties contribute. This is the time of the year to think about those outstanding companies and individuals and to submit nominations for the 2015 awards.

The criteria for Co-op Student of the Year are as follows:
1. Excellent academic record
2. Outstanding work contributions with co-op employer (students must have three rotations completed)
3. Volunteerism or contributions to co-op or University community

Ideally, we would like to have one nominee from each department. The University of Pittsburgh can select one candidate to represent it in the National Co-op Student of the Year competition, which is sponsored by the Cooperative Education Division of the American Society for Engineering Education. The winner will be flown to the annual conference, this year to be held in Austin, Texas, in February 2016, to receive this recognition along with a plaque and $750 award.

Pitt has been recognized with three National Co-op Student of the Year awards and one National Intern of the Year Award in 2014. We have had had many outstanding finalists as well.

The criteria for Co-op Employer of the Year are as follows:
1. Sustained commitment to cooperative education at the University of Pittsburgh
2. Quality of projects and assignments

The Co-op Employer of the Year and all Pitt Co-op Student of the Year nominees will be honored at our annual recognition dinner scheduled for Friday, December 11, 2015, at the Pittsburgh Athletic Association.

We look forward to accepting your nominations. Please submit your nomination by Friday, October 9, 2015, to Maureen Barcic at paub2m@pitt.edu. Feel free to contact her with any questions pertaining to the nomination process.

“I really enjoy my job here. All aspects of it make me enjoy going to work every day—the people I get to work with, the atmosphere, and the work I get to do. I feel like I truly get to apply things I’ve learned in the classroom and the engineers I work with continue to try to give me assignments that will build my knowledge and give me hands-on experience.”

Elizabeth Palko
Harley Davidson

“I absolutely love my position at MSA. The people I work with are awesome and the work I get to do is fun and important. I’m learning so much about engineering and business, including many things about the corporate world that I would never learn in a classroom. I love that my job keeps me very busy and allows me to work on many different things each day. I’m very excited to see what else I’ll get to work on before my rotation finishes this semester!”

Anne Lertola
MSA

“I just want to state that Mascaro is a fantastic employer and treats all its employees and interns with respect. They want you to learn and will give you assignments that are very important. I enjoy working here and I hope I can continue to work here after graduation.”

Christopher Walko
Mascaro

Dates to Remember

Employer Panel Event
Tuesday, September 15, 2015
157 Benedum Hall
7–9 p.m.

Co-op Mock Interviews Event
Thursday, September 17, 2015
William Pitt Union Ballroom
12:30–3 p.m.

Annual Fall Co-op Job Fair
Tuesday, September 22, 2015
William Pitt Union
10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Nomination Deadline for Co-op Student of the Year
Friday, October 9, 2015
Contact Maureen at paub2m@pitt.edu

Co-op Recognition Dinner*
Friday, December 11, 2015
Pittsburgh Athletic Association
*for students who have completed their rotations

Annual Spring Co-op Job Fair
Tuesday, February 16, 2016
William Pitt Union
10 a.m.–2 p.m.