

“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” *Confucius*

**J**anuary 2008 has started with a bang: 92 students have arrived with unbridled enthusiasm, and lots of questions about the co-op work terms. We expect you also have questions and we will address many of these in this newsletter.

At UW, co-op is an educational model promoting continuous learning through the integration of classroom and applied work-based experience. It is a learner-centred model where the onus is on the student to direct their own learning and to make a valuable contribution.

Graduates of a co-op program:

- are adaptable
- have strong problem solving abilities
- understand the realities of the workplace
- have strong discipline-specific knowledge and skills
- are highly employable
- understand career opportunities

In our pharmacy program, every student must successfully complete four work terms. Each work term is four months in duration. The student may complete no more than two work terms in one practice setting and no more than two work terms with one employer. In addition, the student must complete at least one work term in an underserved area.

Over the four work terms, the students will gain experience in medication distribution, direct

patient care, informatics, drug information, etc in a variety of settings which may include community pharmacy, institutional pharmacy, government, industry, professional organizations and primary health care. You have the opportunity to partner with this innovative generation of pharmacy professionals.

Employers have asked the following:

**Q:** *Why should I hire a co-op student?*

**A:** Because you can! There are many benefits for co-op employers, such as:

- Co-op is a cost-effective solution for your short term hiring needs.
- Co-op is a great way to evaluate a potential future employee.
- Co-op students can relieve seasonal fluctuations and complete special projects so regular employees can concentrate on their other high priority job requirements.
- Co-op students offer a fresh perspective to your organization. By hiring a student every four months, you have the opportunity for a continuous flow of new and innovative ideas.

**Q:** *When will students be available for work terms?*

**A:** Our vanguard class will begin their first work terms in September 2008. As of May 2009, there will be pharmacy students available year round.

**Q:** *How much are students paid?*

**A:** Students are required to be paid for their work terms. The University of Waterloo does not set pay scales for co-op students. This is your decision. The rate of pay should be commensurate with the work required. A recent salary survey for first work term co-op science students indicates a pay range of \$12 – \$17 per hour. In time we will be able to report pay ranges for pharmacy co-op students. Students are responsible for their own transportation and accommodation while on work term. However, some employers do provide assistance in these areas.

**Q:** *Does the government provide any financial assistance for hiring co-op students?*

**A:** In return for investing in the future of a University of Waterloo student, the Ontario government provides eligible employers with a tax credit. The credits are available to businesses – large and small, incorporated and unincorporated – that hire eligible post-secondary co-op students at a rate of 10% of salaries, wages and benefits. The maximum available is \$1000 for each qualifying co-op education work term.

**Q:** *How is the School of Pharmacy preparing the students to function in my work environment?*

**A:** Each student will have their own unique skills, abilities and past experiences. Our students have at least two years of university education and 40% have completed at least one university degree. Our curriculum for first year includes the following courses:

**Semester 1:** Human Physiology, Metabolism, Pharmaceutics, Intro to Applied Pharmaceutical Sciences, Computing for Pharmacists, Intro to the Profession of Pharmacy, Professional Communication Skills, Professional Practice

**Semester 2:** Human Physiology, Histology, Pharmaceutics, Pharmacology/Medicinal Chemistry, Professional Communication Skills, Professional Practice, Preparation for Co-op

At the end of semester two, our students will:

- Have been introduced to the variety of pharmacy practice sites available and will understand the role pharmacists play within the entire health team.
- Understand the laws and regulations governing pharmacy.
- Have been introduced to pharmaceutical care principles.
- Be able to identify different sources of drug information and use critical appraisal skills to review the data.
- Have some experience in sterile preparation under a laminar flow hood as well as non-sterile compounding techniques.
- Demonstrate professional interviewing techniques, including assessment and triage, focusing primarily on patient self-care and adherence.
- Be able to demonstrate the use of various medical devices
- Have a working knowledge in medical terminology and prescription abbreviations and be able to use that knowledge to interpret prescriptions
- Be familiar with safety measures such as those proposed by the Institute of Safe Medication Practices and be able to perform a safety audit

In addition, the students are involved locally through their community service projects. To support these projects, students will develop skills such as fundraising, report writing, marketing, and event organization, evaluation of services, project management and sales.

**Q:** *What kind of roles and responsibilities will the first year students be able to take on?*

**A:** The students are working for you. You will define the roles and responsibilities appropriate for your work place. You can indicate the specific skills you require in your job description. The students should be given activities that are suitable to their skills and abilities, will allow them to grow professionally and will help prepare them to become competent, practising pharmacists. We encourage you to challenge them.

A work term for a student could include: assist in drug distribution, assist the pharmacist with the Meds Check program, and host a smoking cessation clinic day. In addition, you might consider a patient safety initiative, informatics, or a drug usage evaluation project. Alternatively, the work term could include government relations, health policy development, pharmacoeconomics evaluation or research. As an employer, feel free to be creative, think outside the box and use the student to tackle those items you always wished you could get to, but just never seemed to have the time for. The possibilities are endless.

**Q:** *What are the next steps towards employing a co-op student?*

**A:**

- You create a job description. (Deadline for job postings for our September 2008 work term is **June 1**).
- The job is registered with Co-operative Education and Career Services (CECS) at the University of Waterloo.
- Students are given an opportunity to review job postings and apply for positions.
- You select the candidates that you wish to interview.

- CECS co-ordinates the interview schedules to meet the employers' needs.
- Interviews take place June 20 – 21, 2008 at the University of Waterloo. You may choose to interview the candidates in person, by phone or by video conferencing.
- Following interviews, you rank students; students rank employers and the co-op system finds an appropriate match.
- Assistance is available for you at each step of the employment process.

**Q:** *What information should I include in my job description?*

**A:** Include the following:

- A descriptive and relevant title.
- A short overview of your organization, department, or project team.
- Details about roles and responsibilities.
- The necessary knowledge and skills.
- Any special requirements (i.e. driver's licence, shift work, etc.).
- Your location.
- The number of hours per week and whether overtime is expected.
- If support is available for travel or accommodation

**Q:** *What expectations are there for evaluation of the students?*

**A:** Employers will complete a midpoint and final general evaluation of the student at the completion of the work term. We are developing an e-portfolio that will permit the student to conduct a self-assessment on the required outcomes that we establish. The employer will have the opportunity to validate the e-portfolio.

**Q:** *Who do I contact for more information or to proceed?*

**A:** Many of you have already spoken with Nancy Waite, Associate Director Practice-Based Education. We now have additional staff, whom you are welcome to contact:

Heather Chase, BScPhm ACPR PharmD  
Experiential Co-ordinator/Instructor  
hchase@uwaterloo.ca  
(519)888-4567 ext 38467

Richard (Rick) Roach BSc Kin  
Assistant Director  
Co-operative Education & Career Services  
rroach@uwaterloo.ca  
(519)888-4567 ext. 35514  
Cell: (519)497-5077



## *Follow-up Response Page*

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**To:** Heather Chase <[hchase@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:hchase@uwaterloo.ca)>

Rick Roach <[rroach@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:rroach@uwaterloo.ca)>

**Fax:** (519) 888-7910

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please contact me at:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The best time to contact me:** \_\_\_\_\_

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