

MECOP Offers New Opportunities to CEM Students and Construction Companies

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As many of you may know, Oregon State University has run a well-organized summer internship job program for their Construction Engineering Management (CEM) students for a number of years. While the CEM intern program is still thriving at OSU, CEM students will soon have an additional opportunity to get real world work experience and help fund their education when the Multiple Engineering Cooperative Program (MECOP) at OSU creates a pilot project for CEM students in 2005.

MECOP has provided meaningful work experience to engi-

neering students in 13 different disciplines for over 25 years. Today the program involves more than 250 students and over 60 companies and governmental agencies. This unique cooperative program receives no state funding and is supported by its member companies. Students apply for the program in the spring of their sophomore year, and if selected, they are chosen by member companies and committed to two six-month internships during their junior and senior years. Each company provides its intern with a mentor to help guide and coach them during their internship.

This type of real work experience takes place in an environment where jobs and an intern's abilities are closely matched. Students are screened, interviewed, and prepared, and industry mentors receive training for the program. Both the student and the company are repeatedly evaluated through the process, and at the end of the internship, students provide feedback to peers about their successes, failures, and experiences.

Students get work experience, learn their strong and weak points, make informed course selections, help pay for their education, are more motivated in class, and develop maturity beyond their years. Member companies provide feedback to the university curriculum and gain a pool of well-trained engineers, a healthy injection of youthful enthusiasm, and a preview of potential employees in a real work setting. In the 25-year history of the MECOP program, over 75 percent of the students are hired by one of the companies where they interned. The university keeps its curriculum current, develops a bridge to industry, and provides an up-to-date educational experience for its students that wouldn't otherwise be possible in many fast-changing professions. Clearly the MECOP program is a win-win-win situation!

The CEM pilot project will be linked to the Civil Engineering Cooperative Program (CECOP), a MECOP branch with its own board of directors. CECOP has been in existence for over six

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years, has 14 member companies, and places 35-40 students each year. The goal is to recruit enough companies to place five CEM students during summer/fall of 2005. Existing CECOP members, the City of Portland, and OBEC engineers have agreed to take two CEM students next year. At least two or three more companies are needed to take part in the CEM pilot project, and member companies that participate in the program can select CEM students and/or students from any of the other disciplines within the School of Engineering.

Gary Petersen, MECOP program director with the OSU College of Engineering, and other members of the board are available to visit with your organization if you are interested in learning more about the CECOP program and the CEM pilot project. If you would like more information, please contact Gary Petersen, 541-737-3210. For more information about the OSU CEM program, contact Assistant Professor and Construction Education Foundation Chair Greg Baker, greg.baker@oregonstate.edu or call 503-793-7612. ❖