

Winter 2016 Term Two Report on Engineering Co-op Executive Briefing

Background on the Engineering Co-op Program and the Proposed 'Open Co-op' Model

In the fall of 2016, the Engineering Undergraduate Society (EUS) was made aware of a series of proposed changes to the Engineering Co-op Program. The changes, collectively labelled 'open co-op,' would introduce unpaid work terms, as well as a number of co-curricular experiences, including student design teams and the Coordinated International Experience (CIE) exchange program, alongside traditional work terms. To date, the only experiences considered by the Engineering Co-op Program have been work terms, defined by the Canadian Association for Cooperative Education (CAFCE) as a minimum of 12 weeks in length, with a minimum of 35 hours of paid work each week (or equivalent hours over the duration of a term).

Summary of Survey Conducted by the EUS

A survey conducted by the EUS on the matter of the open co-op proposal, in addition to the existing co-op framework, was distributed to engineering students, receiving approximately 400 responses, of which slightly more than half were complete and otherwise valid for consideration. Highlights included:

- 73.1% of respondents indicated that they would not be willing to work in an unpaid position
- A majority of students value domestic work term placements over international placements, research placements and entrepreneurship placements combined
- Just one-quarter of respondents felt they received value for money from the Engineering Co-op Program, representing a significant drop in the last two years
- A majority of co-op respondents felt as though current work term assignments weren't helpful to their professional careers
- Approximately 55% of respondents support recognizing co-curricular experiences formally

Recommendations for the Faculty of Applied Science to Implement

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>1. The Engineering Co-op Program should focus on paid work experiences</p> | <p>2. The Engineering Co-op Program should emphasize domestic work terms</p> | <p>3. The Engineering Co-op Program should boost staffing levels to meet student demand</p> |
| <p>4. The Engineering Co-op Program should review work term reports required of students</p> | <p>5. The Faculty of Applied Science should recognize co-curricular experiences in a way external to co-op</p> | |