

University of Technology, Jamaica

# Co-operative Education at UTech

*"Partnering with Industry to produce work-ready graduates "*

## Co-ordinator's Pen



Another major placement period/ academic year has ended and from all accounts it was a successful one.

This success was not a measure of pure luck, neither was it a consequence of genetic disposition on the part of the participating students.

The success of the Co-op Ed programme was, and continues to be, the result of dedication and hard work on the part of our students, commitments and cooperation on the part of our Co-op Ed employers and painstaking preparatory work on the part of the institution.

This issue of *Co-operative Education at UTech* continues to highlight the employers and students behind the success of UTech's Co-op Ed programme.

Happy reading.

*La-Cresha Gordon-Brydson*  
University's Co-op Ed Co-ordinator



## Co-operative Education: An Employer's Social Responsibility - The NHT Story

**P**artnering with industry to produce work-ready graduates" is the tagline of UTech's Cooperative Education (Co-op Ed) programme and this remains true of the programme largely because of the consistent involvement of companies such as the National Housing Trust (NHT).

NHT is a statutory organization mandated to generate funding for the housing construction sector and, in so doing, increase and enhance the stock of available housing for the benefit of its contributors who wish to build, to buy or to repair their homes.

NHT, has for the last several years, partnered with the University in promoting our students' work readiness through relevant on-the-job experience mainly during the summer months of each year. To this end, a number of students have benefitted from placement opportunities with the NHT.

### *Mutually beneficial partnership*

NHT's continued partnership stems from its strong belief that engagement in the Co-op Ed programme yields much benefit to both the organization and to students. According to Mrs.

## Co-operative Education: An Employer's Social Responsibility - The NHT Story

Patricia Headlam, Employment & Retention Coordinator at the NHT, students are sure to gain experience that will only be beneficial to their professional growth and career development. Additionally, the experience helps the interns to build a network, that are quite beneficial in the future.

NHT, on the other hand, has developed recruiting channels through networking with UTech. The company has also been exposed to new talents and ideas for the workplace and the programme has certainly assisted in sourcing new hires at the entry level.



**Ms. AnnaKay Morrison**  
Co-op Ed student placed at the NHT (Loan Portfolio Unit) in Summer 2012.

**AnnaKay says:**  
*.....It was a great experience. I now have a better understanding of the company and how they help fellow Jamaicans to acquire their homes.*

### ***Programme impact***

UTech's Co-op Ed students have impacted many departments within NHT. Their assignments have been in areas such as:

- Accounting
- Finance
- Secretarial/Administrative
- Customer Service
- Construction
- Information Technology

And although these areas have been affected by budgetary constraints, the NHT is dedicated to its continued participation in the programme as this is further seen as enhancing the company's image via social responsibility.

### ***Organization and Supervision***

NHT is pleased to report that the Co-op Ed programme is well organized and the School/Unit effectively communicates in ensuring that students are placed. The students have also brought quality and good skill-sets to the organization.

The organization ensures that students are trained and supervised as this is critical to the success of the partnership. Supervisors ensure that the interns are coached, guided, monitored and are fully engaged at all times so that the environment facilitates learning and skill development of the students. With such an environment and culture, students have produced quality work enhanced by commendable work and behavioral attitudes and willingness to learn.

### ***Advice***

Mrs. Headlam advises existing and prospective partnering institutions (to continue) to be a part of the programme as it not only benefits the students in gaining skills, knowledge and job opportunities but it also provides new ideas for an organization, recruitment channels and the opportunity to act with respect to their social responsibilities.

Finally, Mrs. Headlam encourages students to maximize on a Co-op Ed placement opportunity as among other things, the experience facilitates the honing of skills, increases students' knowledge-base as well as aids in professional growth. It also provides the opportunity to formulate networks. She further advises that students strive to leave a positive mark which is important for future hires and opportunities.

## UTech Students Score Big On Work Ethics in Employer Survey

During 2011-2012 academic year, twenty Co-op Ed employers completed a questionnaire, part of which asked that they rate their interns' employability skill-sets using the following scale: excellent, good, fair, weak and not observed/ not assessed.

Our respondents were from several industries and who facilitated students from across various disciplines. Below is a table borrowed from a larger report which points to the success of the Co-op Ed programme. The table is intended to highlight **Work Ethics** as one critical employability skill-set on which students received the highest rating from employers.

**Table: Employers' Rating of Employability Skill-sets: Students' Work Ethics**

Skill-set - WORK ETHICS	Excellent (as a %)	Good (as a %)	Fair (as a %)	Weak (as a %)	Not assessed/ not observed (as a %)
Attitude to Work	65	30	5	0	0
Attendance	80	20		0	0
Punctuality	65	25	10	0	0

N=20

## SCIT participates in Digital Jam 2.0



Digital Jam 2.0 - "The Future of Work is Online", was held in Jamaica for the first time during the period June 28-30, 2012.

The main objective of the event was to promote youth employment in the virtual economy in Jamaica and thus an avenue was created for young people to showcase their IT talent by their participation in a 24 hour Hackathon and an Applications Contest. Additional features included Seminars, the Market place and Job Fair.

UTech was highly visible on this occasion as several students from the School of Computing and Information Technology (SCIT) were recognized for their commendable performance in the competitions. Further SCIT, supported by the Co-op Ed Unit, used the opportunity to promote the programmes offered by the School as well as the work-integrated learning component attached to these programmes to all stakeholders. UTech looks forward to formally engaging all our new ICT partners during the new academic year. Welcome on board!

## Students speak OUT about Co-op Ed



BEd. In Business & Computing student

### What have you learnt from the experience?

It allowed me to identify my strengths and weaknesses, practise to use data entry systems in the real world and using software such as 'Quickbooks' to manage data information. It also helped to build on my people skills and various office operations which would allow me to function in an office setting in addition to the classroom (teaching) environment.

### Do you think this experience was worth while?

(Student on the right) My internship experience was a great one... it has exposed me to all the different departments in the hotel. I learned the day-to-day operation of each department in order to meet the needs of the guests... the employees were excellent in terms of dealing with both guests and their fellow employees.



BSc. In Hospitality & Tourism Mgmt. students

### To what extent were you able to apply classroom knowledge while on Co-op Ed?

I learnt basic engineering principles such as Heat Transfer and Separation, that enabled me to understand and better assimilate the specific inner workings of General Bio-Diesel in Seattle, USA. The experience served as additional knowledge that I used as I was a part of a team that created a pilot Bio-Diesel plant at UTech.



B. Eng in Chemical Engineering student



*Be Remembered.....  
For the right Reasons*

Your first day on the job is the day you begin to write your own appraisal. So here are some tips on how to write an appraisal that will propel your career:

- ◆ From the outset, seek to develop a plan for achieving your short and long -term career goals.
- ◆ Pay keen attention to your soft skills. These are as equally important as your technical skills.
- ◆ Ever so often conduct a realistic assessment of your skills, training and functional expertise and plan strategically to build on the competencies needed for the company's success as well as your own.
- ◆ Among the general skills that employers value as contributing to the success of the company are **leadership and management skills, strategic thinking, versatility, problem solving, people skills and customer focus** .
- ◆ Seek out the high achievers in your company and identify the qualities that accelerate their success; where fitting, apply the qualities.
- ◆ Be flexible; do not be afraid to take on challenges outside of your given job description.

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*Bulletin Board*

EMPLOYERS

Please be reminded that Co-op Ed placements are being accommodated throughout the academic year. Students are available for 15-20 hours during the semester.

During the Christmas break (mid December to mid January) students are available for full 40 hour work weeks.

Please send your placement requests to [ced@utech.edu.jm](mailto:ced@utech.edu.jm).



*Bulletin Board*

STUDENTS

**Employment Empowerment Sessions**

The Career and Placement in collaboration with the Co-op Ed Unit will present another series of **Employment Empowerment Sessions** commenced **September 20**.

These sessions are held on Thursdays between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m. and are designed to prepare students for the professional environment. For further information please contact [placement@utech.edu.jm](mailto:placement@utech.edu.jm) .

**Co-op Ed Information Sessions**

These are hosted by your School. Please view regularly your School's notice board to ascertain the date of these very important sessions. Pertinent information that will aid the placement process are discussed at the sessions.

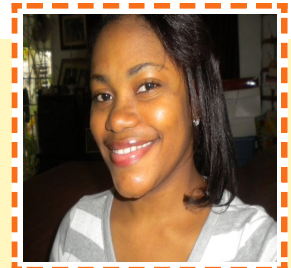
**Co-op Ed Placement**

The Summer placement period officially ended on August 24, 2012. All reports for the Summer period should by now be handed in.

Be reminded that Co-op Ed placements are being accommodated throughout the new academic year. Once your timetable facilitates this, there is placement flexibility for students from SOE, SOTAVE, SCIT and SOBA. Please speak with your Co-ordinator.

**Co-op Ed Exemption**

Co-op Ed exemptions are facilitated during the first two weeks of each academic year. If you are scheduled for Co-op Ed this AY, you should have already apply on the regular exemption forms.



*Acknowledgement*

The Co-op Ed Unit is pleased to acknowledge Miss Jody-Anne Garvey, Earn and Study student, assigned to the Unit.

Ms. Garvey is responsible for putting together this issue of the Co-operative Education newsletter. She is a third year FELS student pursuing a B.Ed in Business and Computing Studies.

As the Chinese proverb says " Tell me, I will forget; show me, I may remember; Involve me, and I will understand", Ms. Garvey encourages all students to be part of the Co-op Ed experience as it adds meaning to classroom learning and develops employability skills.