

## RETAIL MERCHANDISING & MANAGEMENT CO-OP/INTERNSHIP

### DESCRIPTION

The retail merchandising and management cooperative education experience (or internship as referred to by some retailers) in stores, distribution, or corporate offices fosters the transfer of knowledge and skills acquired in previous classroom experiences into competencies required for successful performance in a retail management career. The guided co-op experience provides the opportunity for students to apply practiced management experience to senior level courses upon returning to classes. Although the work experience may involve some selling, the co-op is not a sales position and may not encompass any more than 25% of the co-op student's time or responsibility.

### 400-LEVEL REQUIRED OBJECTIVES

1. The retail co-op student will explore the functional areas of the retail organization such as merchandising, promotion, human resources, operations and finance.
2. The retail co-op student will assume increasing levels of authority and variety in responsibilities within the organization under the direction of the employment supervisor.
3. The retail co-op student will be trained and participate in management-like decision making responsibilities while being supervised and assessed.
4. The retail co-op student will undertake specific projects as directed by the employment supervisor. These projects will require the student to apply critical thinking skills that contribute to the overall effectiveness of the retail operation.
5. The employment supervisor, with input from the co-op student and university supervisor will develop specific performance objectives and a training timeline for the internship period. Frequent formal and informal reviews of the co-op student's performance will be conducted by the supervisor to allow recognition of accomplishments, identification of strengths and weaknesses, and establishment of a plan for improving job performance.
6. Students at UW-Stout must have attained senior status in the Retail Merchandising and Management Program with a GPA of 2.5 or higher and have an electronic resume on file in the UW-Stout Career Services office. The co-op/internship must not be the student's last requirement before graduation. (Usually the summer before the student's senior year is the most appropriate time for the co-op/internship). It is strongly recommended that the student's 500 hours of work experience be completed before the co-op education experience.
7. Co-ops that are developed by university faculty and staff and are administered through Career Services must be taken for university credit by students.
8. The retail co-op experience must be for a retailer, approved by the university supervisor through and coordinated through the UW-Stout Career Services office. While many companies will interview students on campus for internships, other arrangements are possible including telephone and off-campus interviews, but still must be coordinated through Career Services once a job offer is made/accepted.
9. Cooperative education is intended to be beneficial for both the student and the employer; therefore, students must be compensated financially for their work. This is also a requirement from UW-Stout's Career Services.
10. To substitute a cooperative education experience for the BURTL-426 Fashion Retail Practicum course in the RMM program, the experience must meet the above criteria as well as equate to at least 3 university credits, which requires a continuous training period of at least 400 total hours while working 32-40 hours per week. It is possible to participate in a co-op experience for longer periods of time, earn additional credits, and enrich the experience