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Co-op Cookout promotes co-operative education and hotdogs

Although no one kept an official count, students devoured 530 Oscar Mayer hotdogs during Co-op Cookout, a three-hour event that brought students and potential co-operative opportunities together in an informal arena.



For three hours, a steady stream of students came to the Co-op Cookout to eat hotdogs and to learn about co-operative opportunities.

“We thought of this as an opportunity to get them all together in an informal setting with no resumes allowed,” said **Fred Sitkins**, the CEAS director of co-operative education who coordinated the event. “We have the formal Engineering Opportunity Day in the fall, but we wanted to remind students that employers are recruiting year-round.”



Students ate hotdogs.



Students cooked hotdogs.

Among the companies that participated were the event’s two sponsors: Kraft – which includes Post Cereals – brought the hotdogs, and Dana Corp. contributed funds for the condiments, buns, and soda pop. Representatives from Stryker Corp., Kalamazoo County Road Commission, and Tenneco Automotive also interviewed. “They were all looking for specific kinds of co-op students,” Sitkins said. “We tried to attract the kind of students they wanted.”

Company representatives brought information about the kinds of students they are looking for and interviewed students informally. The reps gave business cards to students who wrote contact information for the reps to make future contact.

According to Sitkins, students sometimes wait until after finals to begin looking for positions, and the cookout served as a reminder to start earlier. “This was an opportunity to get them all together.”

The turnout was larger than anticipated. Two “soda pop and bun” runs to area grocery stores were required to feed the troops. “The event was successful far beyond our expectations,” Sitkins said.



Tim Anderson (left), human resources manager at Kraft, discusses co-op opportunities and cookout event with **Fred Sitkins**, CEAS co-op director, at the Co-op Cookout. Kraft donated 1,000 Oscar Mayer hotdogs to the event, and Dana Corp. donated funds for the buns, condiments, and soda pop

Sitkins credited **Jennifer Messana**, a graduate assistant in Career & Student Employment Services for the cookout idea. Others who contributed to the success of the event include **Tracey Moon**, engineering and aviation career advisor and **Kim DeVries**, CEAS academic advisor.

Cooperative education, an optional program at WMU, brings classroom and work experience together and benefits both students and employers. CEAS presently offers students three options in co-operative education.

In *alternating co-ops*, students work one semester and attend class the next for a minimum of three semesters. For *concurrent co-ops*, students are employed part-time while they attend classes during the academic year and full time during the summer.

In *internships*, students are employed either part- or full-time during the summer and possibly during the school year.

Sitkins’ immediate goal is to have 30 to 40 students registered in co-operative options. In the future, he would like “far more.” Those interested in co-ops – students and employers – should contact him at fred.sitkins@wmich.edu

Send your thoughts or suggestions for future topics to the editor at jerrie.fiala@wmich.edu Thank you.