

Developing Highly Effective Industry Partnerships: Co-op to Capstone Courses

Workshop Leader: Chris Plouff – Grand Valley State University

According to a recent survey of large companies by the Michigan Colleges Foundation and reported on mlive.com in December 2012, “internships and field projects are the most important experience students can have in preparing for the workforce.” Well-developed and coordinated work experiences and projects are extremely beneficial to both academic institutions and the workplace. Carefully planned collaborative efforts between education and employers result in high-impact experiences including increased learning outcomes for students, advanced knowledge and skill development, more efficient hiring processes, improved worker retention, and cost-effective, quality work products.

This workshop will engage participants in the processes that generate effective partnerships between education and the workplace, resulting in STEM talent development that is highly desirable by students and employers alike. The workshop will address:

- Developing an effective internship/co-op program from both the education institution and employer perspectives
- Identifying and recruiting the right partners
- Assessing the effectiveness of the internship/co-op experience
- Enhancing the learning experience through distance learning components
- Generating industry-based course projects for a win-win experience for schools and employers
- Developing a robust industry-partnered capstone project process that integrates employer needs with real-world, interdisciplinary student experiences.

About the Workshop Leader:

Chris Plouff is an Assistant Professor and the James R. Sebastian Chair of Engineering Cooperative Education and Education Development at Grand Valley State University. He has been on the faculty in the School of Engineering for the past five years where he teaches foundation-level engineering courses, coordinates the academic components of the mandatory engineering co-op program, and coordinates assessment efforts for the School of Engineering. Prior to his current role, he was the Director of Career Services at Grand Valley State, and spent seven years coordinating the corporate relations aspect of the engineering co-op program. Chris began his career as an engineer working for Earth Tech in environmental remediation. He has his Doctorate in Education degree in Educational Leadership from Eastern Michigan University where he conducted his dissertation research on socialization and entry processes of engineering students into professional organizations and roles through a co-op program. His Bachelor's and Master's degrees are in civil/environmental engineering from Michigan Technological University and he is licensed as a Professional Engineer in the State of Michigan.