Co-op Work Assignment

The assignments I was given at Autodesk were both interesting and challenging. I was provided decent guidance along the way and my co-workers were willing to answer my questions. The responsibilities involved in this internship are significant; the intern is expected to contribute to professional code and complete reliable projects. I have found the responsibilities to be sometimes overwhelming but it led to very positive learning experiences.

The HR department at Autodesk provided me with training on the first two days. I was assigned 2 main mentors who guided me along the way. Training included a meeting over the phone with their intern representative who kindly explained me the basic administrative tools at my disposal. I spent one afternoon with a developer who showed me how to set up my machine and taught me how to use the coding tools I would need. The amount of information I received during training was overwhelming but my co-workers offered guidance later when needed.

I was eased into the organization with my first two projects which did not require coding for the main software. I was instead assigned individual programs which aimed at improving the productivity of developers. During these assignments, I met my coworkers and learned about the organization while working in familiar settings. As these projects were entirely mine, it left a lot of room for innovation. My supervisor was always willing to listen to my ideas and often encouraged me to implement them.

My first project was to setup an existing script to run on a machine in the Ithaca office. As my supervisor and I thought of other interesting functionalities to implement, the script grew into a full website with hundreds of developers using it at Autodesk. My second project came along after I was assigned to fix an existing code changing tracker. The code had been produced over many years, making it messy and unreliable. My supervisor therefore assigned me to code a new emailer from scratch. Both of these projects have a large amount of users which puts heavy responsibilities on the intern. Overall, I would say Autodesk expects the co-op student to be creative and reliable which provided for a very interesting and challenging experience.

After completing these projects and getting to know the organization, my supervisor assigned me to the main project. The scale of the code is like nothing I had seen in class. Furthermore, any changes can potentially break the software and block dozens of people from doing their work. The amount of training I received seemed small compared to the impact my actions could potentially have. This transition was a little hard and required perseverance but I felt comfortable within a few weeks.

Assessment of Learning and Development

I am currently an ECE undergraduate student focusing on computer architecture. Since this field is closely tied to computer science, experience in this field is a strong advantage. My goal for this coop was to gain a deeper understanding of computer science, ideally on large scale projects. Furthermore, the logic for approaching problems in both computer architecture and computer science is similar. My expectations were fully fulfilled by this co-op.

In the future, I hope to join a multinational company in which engineers work on large scales projects. Autodesk provided me with an opportunity to witness the organization and practices required to divide the work with hundreds of employees. I became familiar with the tools needed to share resources across engineers around the world and I hope that this knowledge will be useful when I join
the professional world. Overall Autodesk allowed me to gain a much deeper understanding of engineering practices in a large scale organization which was one of my top goals for this co-op.

From my point of view, however, the most positive improvements I made were in communication. My supervisor put me in very various settings, from presentations to small talk at the coffee machine, in which I learned and practiced professional standards. By the end, I was able to communicate effectively over various channels. I was very happy with the way Autodesk improved my professional behavior which will be certainly useful in the near and far future.

My experience at Autodesk was overall very positive and I learned a lot along the way. If I were to go over these weeks over again, there is little I would change. I had the chance to make mistakes and learn from them. I received enough feedback from my supervisor to adapt to a professional environment and to learn professional practices.

Life Out-side Co-op

I was fortunate enough that my co-op was located close to Cornell. I was able to keep the same housing and spend time with friends after work. It made my co-op experience a lot more enjoyable and less stressful.

Evaluation

The best part of this job is the variety of tasks that are assigned. It allowed me to work on many different aspects of programming and it kept my days interesting. The worst part was the overwhelming aspect of some the tasks I was assigned. Although freedom is great in a professional environment, I sometimes felt a bit clueless about what my next step should be. This lack of guidance, however, also allows the intern to take initiatives and carry responsibilities.