First Term Summary

I was invited to work for CRP Industries as a third option. Some background: CRP Industries is a Distribution company. That means they import parts, primarily German, and primarily automotive, and distribute them to companies around the US. They are based in an industrial park half way between Manhattan and Philadelphia.

My role at CRP: As mentioned, CRP is company that does import->distribution. So my role as an engineering intern was varied. The company does not ‘do’ any engineering as I had thought of it. Thus, when I was brought onboard, my primary role was to assist my boss (the Vice President of the Industrial division) in whatever he was working on. However, I was alone in my pursuits. There are very few engineers at CRP, and those who are do not work as engineers, but rather as administrators and presidents (as is the case with Dan Schilidge, president of CRP, who has a degree in MechE from Cornell).

My role as an intern to the VP of industrial meant if something like a high pressure hose needed to be tested, I would be the one to walk out to the warehouse (yes, most of the building is a warehouse) and test the hose myself. If a timing belt was returned because it failed prematurely, or because it passed a third party test and looked fine, I would look at it to write up what I saw and my opinions of the product.

Atmosphere at CRP: Keeping in mind that I have never worked in the USA before, CRP felt corporate feel. Khaki Pants and long sleeve button up was the norm. The work environment is very quiet. Cubicles and all that you might associate with them. Coffee machine next to the microwave and fridge in the kitchenette area. Co-workers were very nice and accommodating, but do not interact much outside of work.

Also, as an inter, I was lucky enough to travel on three occasions. The goal was to expose me to different elements of the company and what they do. I was flown to attend a trade show in Atlanta, GA, to see a high speed spindle we sell, and to Chicago to look around for potential customers, and to Denver, CO, to do some testing on something we only had access to in Colorado (sorry for the vagueness).

Perks: As I was nearly the only person working as a full time engineer (wannabe), I was given a lot of leeway in anything I worked on. People left me to my design, and did not interfere. This was nice because I could test whatever I want, and however I wanted. Also working under the VP has an advantage that if a project needed funding, such as having a part made, which would cost a non-negligible amount of money, the funding would appear to make sure the project continues on. My boss is a great man. He is understanding, smart, patient, and eager to teach. Having him as my boss meant the world of difference as far as my experience at CRP Industries.

Draw-backs: As I was nearly the only person working as a full time engineer, I was the only person doing anything that interested me. My boss has a degree in mechanical engineering, but outside of our conversations, there was little instruction to be had that would further my engineering knowledge. This is a very different atmosphere from what I experience at Cornell, being surrounded by countless
dedicated engineers (or at least engineers in training) who saturate the air with engineering knowledge which is free to pick from any low hanging branch. Also, as it is not an engineering company, there are not have many of the engineering tools I take for granted as a student here at Cornell such as CAD software, FEA software, any form of a machine shop, engineering books or standards resources, etc.

Odds and ends:

Transportation: this is New Jersey. You will need a car.

Social: I connected with a church near my home, and that is where I spent my free time. I do not know how you might want to spend your free time while there. I lived with a friend also, which was fun. We would repair cars in our free time.

Housing: Again, it’s New Jersey. Everything is a 20 minute drive away. Though I lived with a friend, you could do a Craig’s list search of central Jersey, and look on a map to cross reference all of the towns from which you could commute.

Overview: Though I will be happily returning for the summer of ’13, I would hope for more interaction with other engineers, so that I am not the one becoming the ‘expert’ in, let’s say, industrial hose fitting procedures, but rather could look to an experienced engineer, and glean from their knowledge, instead of developing my own. But as I mentioned, working directly under the VP has allowed me to finish one particular project of modifying a motorcycle drive train that was a joy ride of fun, but could have been much improved by having a proper engineering resources, such as the afore mentioned CAD software, and an FEA software package at my disposal. And I was very fortunate and had an excellent boss.
David L.

*Summary of Summer 2013 Mechanical Engineering Co-op with CRP Industries*

Returning for my second term with CRP Industries, I was hoping to have new projects to work on that resembled the better projects of the previous term, such as designing and building an alternative drive train system for a dirt bike. However, there were few such projects during this past summer term.

I did not have a clearly defined role at CRP. As their focus on not engineering, there was a very limited number of ways I could apply my engineering education. CRP is exceptional at Automotive OEM parts supply (they import from Europe)—but do little engineering in-house. As such, the activities I was involved with or in charge of were oriented around inventory management for the warehouse. My original mentor, Guy Renshaw (a Mechanical Engineer by training), had been working very diligently to grow the industrial branch of the Company over which he is the VP, therefore he did not have much time to mentor me. I ended up spending most of my time working under Pete Sanquini, VP of business development. While working with Mr. Sanquini I worked to standardize the markings on hoses CRP purchases. I also worked on returning bad products to suppliers, and was involved in efforts to improve CRP’s sales catalogues.

In general, the most important thing I learned while working at CRP was the importance of behaving professionally. Learning to dress correctly, and to have a behavior that reflects your dedication to the job was something about which I was originally rather naive. I began to develop a better self-awareness of my own actions and words which allowed me to carefully choose how to convey a personal of the attentive and serious employee that the company wanted.

As mentioned, one of the challenges of working as CRP Industries was the lack of projects/tasks at which I could apply myself. Due to this lack of work (particularly at the start of the term), I found myself needing to take initiative and pursue opportunities to find other responsibilities in which I could invest my time. This meant walking from office to office asking for work with which I could help. Realizing people were not going to come to me; I learned to go to them to learn take action on my own in pursuing work.

While I was not at work, I would spend time playing pick-up soccer at the park near my home. I chose to live near Rutgers in New Brunswick in a student housing building. The living situation was amazing. It was cheap, I had an excellent roommate, and there was a college scene nearby if I choose to go out. Living in New Brunswick meant a 30 minute commute each way. I cannot image working at CRP without a vehicle of your own. New Jersey as a whole is not public-transportation friendly if you aren’t using a train to get into the City.

Over all, I think my time spent there as a mechanical engineer could have been better spent somewhere else that had the background and the means to better develop my skills as a mechanical engineer; a company that had a program to give interns/co-ops work they could be involved with that others could give guidance on. One of most engineering related big tasks I was given was to research and write up
reports on new products in which CRP was interested. However they were compiled with little guidance available and they little effect and resulted in no tangible improvements for the company.

While my experience there as a mechanical engineer left me wanting a bit more engineering engagement, I do know that CRP has a lot of excellent opportunities for ORIE Engineering. There are many many processes in the warehouse work that would be an excellent learning opportunity for that field of engineering.