Job Summary

A. Co-op Work Assignment

I worked at the Kraft R&D Beverages Headquarters in Tarrytown, NY for 20 weeks and learned about the production process behind creating Capri Sun. I worked on two main projects: optimizing a new pouch sterilization process and evaluating the process engineering for a new beverage product. I was the only Co-op, so there was no formal orientation, but I was assigned a buddy to show me around the Kraft buildings. I am very grateful to my manager, who was always willing to answer any of my questions and helped guide me during my time at Kraft.

Kraft was looking to implement a more efficient and cheaper sterilization process for Capri Sun, for which the new equipment had just recently arrived in the pilot plant. My role was to determine the best conditions for running this equipment. I ran a series of tests to determine how certain factors, such as temperature, flow rate, and dosing time, would affect the final product. Additionally, new pouches were being developed for this process, so I worked to determine which type of pouch would be most leak-resistant and seal without any cracks.

When I joined, Kraft was also in the process of launching a new product called Super V. My project dealt with the new ingredient of fiber, which was very viscous and sticky. This was a concern, because the production plant pumps and pipes were not designed for such a heavy liquid. I had the chance to run test experiments in the pilot plant to help evaluate any potential problems caused by the fiber. I also travelled to two off-site production plants to assist in validating the mixing capability of blend tanks, specifically for the fiber.

B. Assessment of Learning & Development

I had no industry experience before this Co-op, so I learned a great deal about the role of a real chemical engineer in the food industry. I was exposed to the both the process engineering and research & development sides of creating a commercial beverage, and felt that the work I was doing was valuable to the company. Although I did not use much of my engineering coursework, there was a lot of learning on the job and everyone was always willing to offer advice.

It was interesting to work in a corporate environment, where the results of each project are extremely important. This was completely different mindset from completing problem sets and prelims at college. This co-op position helped improve my writing skills, since after every project I needed to write a final report with all my information and results. If I were to go through the same experience again, I would take the initiative to be less shy and more proactive with my work.
C. Life Outside Co-op

I am convinced that this is one of the best locations to Co-op. Kraft generously provided a furnished apartment with parking at an extended stay hotel in White Plains, NY for $150/wk. However, Kraft is transitioning through a company split at the moment, so the apartment may be at a different location if the Tarrytown worksite is moved. My apartment was walking distance from the Westchester Bee-Line bus and the MTA Metro North train stations. There were two buses, which went from the bus station straight to the Tarrytown site, but the trip took 40min. By car, the commute was a quick 10min.

The Tarrytown Kraft campus was a beautiful location to work. The lunch room had a perfect view of the Tappan Zee Bridge. I had access to a gym and pool at Kraft and a second gym in my apartment building. Across the street from my apartment in White Plains, there was a shopping mall, a public library, a movie theater, grocery stores, and restaurants. Additionally, New York City was only a short 30min train ride away, so I had the chance to attend several concerts, watch Broadway shows, and visit museums. There were plenty of events occurring on a daily basis to keep me busy.

D. Evaluation

I enjoyed the relaxed, friendly environment at Kraft. Managers were very flexible and understanding if I needed to leave early or work from home. It felt like a little community where everyone was willing to help each other out. As a Co-op student, I thought that I would only get to know a few people, but Kraft has a Meet and Greet program in place where new employees can schedule one-on-one meetings with everyone from engineers to managers. I felt welcomed and everyone was genuinely interested to get to know me. Kraft is also dedicated to the outside community, and I had the opportunity to volunteer at a kindergarten in Stamford during the Delicious Difference Week with other Kraft employees.

Although I loved my co-op experience and the people I worked with, I also realized that the food industry was not the right fit for me. I personally believe that I would excel in a field that involves more of engineering theory, and therefore, will not be returning to Kraft for my second Co-op term.

E. Additional Information

Please feel free to contact me (arn28@cornell.edu) if you have any questions regarding the Co-op experience at Kraft. I would love to answer any questions that you may have regarding Kraft or the Co-op process.