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Mechanical Engineering
Tompkins Cooperative Extension

This second round of the coop work assignment was very different from my first. Because National Grid cancelled their coop program due to company downsizing and restructuring, I was left in spring semester of 2011 without a coop company to work for. Thankfully with the help of the career services offices I was able to secure a local opportunity at the Cooperative Extension doing energy management work. I was actually hired as a single intern to keep track of local engineering firms’ commercial and industrial energy audits, creating case studies, reaching out to community members as a part of NYSERDA’s rebate program, and ultimately preparing for the August Energy Summit. To prepare I was given a series of audits and some technical manuals relevant to the industry. My mentor was also my supervisor. We worked very intimately to produce deliverables for this project, as he was the primary contact for the southern tier counties.

Having worked in the energy industry during my first term, this was relatively similar granted, on a much smaller scale compared to megawatt power plants. Working at Tompkins CCE was a very rewarding experience, and I feel I learned not only about energy, but about its relevance to every-day people and how energy efficiency is perceived. Although I am uncertain if I will pursue a career in the energy industry, I feel very comfortable and feel competent in the field if I do decide to. Of particular note was the diversity of the office. There were various departments devoted to different motivations, from child care to energy efficiency to composting, and I feel I learned about more than engineering. I particularly enjoyed working with the Energy Corps, who had a very similar motivation of energy efficiency, but on a residential level instead of commercial and industrial. Going to work daily with a group of like-minded and driven students was very inspiring, not to mention made for very entertaining lunch hours.
I was fortunate enough to have my second term right here in Ithaca. I simply used the apartment I would have otherwise sublet. Transportation over the summer is not a concern, walking or biking should suffice, and busses can do on hot days. Social activities are endless here during the summer, with fairs, sports leagues, and regular parties from the large number of students who do stay in Ithaca for research, classes or whatnot. The employer did offer opportunities particularly for community service, as it is a core element of Tompkins CCE. The best part of the job was the company. Working in an environment of driven people who genuinely were interested and cared, being surrounded by young and vibrant people, and working on projects that had very immediate effects was very rewarding. The worst features was walking up Gun Hill on a hot day, or possibly tight deadlines to produce many deliverables in time for the Energy Summit. Overall, I had a great experience as an energy management intern at Tompkins CCE, and recommend any green-minded mechanical engineer to consider it as a very exciting opportunity in their career.