UPS Job Summary – First Term
Matt Zambelli
NetID: mpz4
Major: Information Science, Systems, and Technology

Co-op Work Assignment
My co-op assignment was in the industrial engineering group at UPS, and I worked mainly with the “feeders” operation. The feeders are the tractor trailers that move large volumes of packages between sorting hubs and major corporate customers, as opposed to the smaller brown package cars that deliver primarily to residential addresses. Industrial engineering is responsible for many different tasks at UPS, including projecting volume, planning and optimizing operations, and tracking and reporting results. It is important for an industrial engineering department employee to understand almost every aspect of UPS, because IE is the first place people go when there is a problem.

All of my projects were computer based. My first taste of UPS industrial engineering came from compiling daily and weekly reports for different managers around the district. Outside of that, I spent a lot of my time working with VBA in Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, and Microsoft MapPoint, building spreadsheet and database applications for managers, supervisors, and other departments within UPS. I also used these tools to perform a gap analysis on corporate-wide data reports, which was eventually fixed based on my findings.

UPS orientation lasted a few days; they gave us a tour of the UPS hub at Philadelphia International Airport, and they spent a good amount of time going over UPS culture, what it’s like working at UPS full-time, and an overview of what happens between when a package is shipped and when it’s delivered. On my first day in my office, I met with a management trainee who was moving to a different department. He showed me the reports I was responsible for putting together, and gave me a lot of general information about his experience at the company. Once I was comfortable with that, I began taking on more challenging projects. I received no formal training with the programming languages I had to use, so recalled what I had learned in school and found online resources and APIs.

My supervisor, Kate Cloyd, worked in the same office as me. We had the same hours (which is sometimes not the case at a 24-hour company like UPS), so she was very accessible when I had questions. I know one of the other UPS co-ops wasn’t assigned a specific supervisor, so it was much more difficult for him to know which projects to work on, and which should take priority over others. Two other supervisors and a manager worked in my office as well – they were great resources if I had a problem or needed some input on my projects.

Assessment of Learning and Development
I am very much “undecided”, as far as my career interests go. I know I’ll be using computers and technology, but beyond that I’m not too sure where I want to end up. The great thing about a co-op is it gives the student an opportunity to “test the waters” early
on and learn what he likes and doesn’t like about certain industries. My co-op at UPS is no exception. I used programming and reasoning skills I learned through my major in almost every assignment I worked on. My position wasn’t particularly good for large group projects or leadership experience, but my next rotation at UPS will focus more on those aspects of professional development.

A huge part of this co-op that separates professional assignments from assignments in school is the lifespan and breadth of a finished project. Many of my projects at UPS are expected to be usable by other engineers, as well as non-computer users such as on-road driver supervisors. These projects should also be flexible enough to accommodate different applications in other parts of my district, or potentially any other district in the country. It forces me to make good documentation for my projects, and to raise my standards for quality and usability. This experience will no doubt aid me in all my future endeavors, whether they are academic or professional.

Life Outside of Co-op
My first co-op rotation was at the Willow Grove hub in Horsham, PA, which is a suburb about 40 minutes outside of central Philadelphia. The apartments in this area are generally nicer and more expensive than anything you’d find in the city; the Willow Grove facility is not too far from northeast Philadelphia where you can find some cheaper, albeit less safe, neighborhoods to rent in. I used rent.com to find a moderately priced place in North Wales, a town not too far from my office. While visiting the area to find apartments, I also picked up a local newspaper to see what was available. A benefit with using rent.com is that they’ll give you a $100 gift card if you sign a lease through them.

One big factor when looking for an apartment was the short-term nature of my stay. Some places wouldn’t accommodate a 4 month lease, or would charge a premium for the privilege of terminating a lease in less than 6 months.

I was never bored living in North Wales. You can find a lot of shopping centers and malls right in the immediate area. There’s always the option of driving or taking a train to Philadelphia for restaurants and other night-life attractions. Cornell did a good job keeping me connected with other co-ops in the area, so I never had a problem finding something to do.

You need a car to get to and from work in this area; there is no public transportation that goes through Horsham. There are, however, train stations if you want to go to Philadelphia or some locations in Jersey. UPS is close with The United Way, so you can always find some community service to do. I didn’t find any local or corporate sport leagues, but I didn’t look very hard.

Evaluation
All in all, I had a good experience during my first term at UPS, and I’m looking forward to the summer when I return. My supervisor has given me multiple opportunities to do projects for and communicate with upper management, which has given me a lot of good experience. I like that a day in the industrial engineering department could be very unpredictable: on an unexpectedly heavy day, we might have to go into the actual hub
and help coordinate unloaders and conveyor belts. This job also requires some quick on-the-fly analysis using database tools, which forces me to be confident with my knowledge and ability to get results quickly and efficiently. I really like the area I’m living in, and I’ve met a lot of smart people (including some Cornell alums). I also like that I might be doing something completely different during my second work term.

My hours are from 10am to 6pm. Since UPS is a 24 hour company, hours may vary depending on where they need you. You might have to be at work at 6am, or you might have to work the night shift. This could be a bad feature for some people working a co-op at UPS. While everyone is responsible for them to some degree, the daily and weekly reports could get dull and monotonous after months of the same thing. You could also find yourself doing less/less meaningful work at times, though that depends on your supervisor. I wish I had the opportunity to work with more people and to gain more leadership experience this term, but I will most likely see more of that next term.

So far, I’ve had a good experience at UPS. Operations Research majors should look at other job summaries to get more of a feel for what to expect in terms of their major and professional goals. As an ISST major, I’m happy with the work I did at UPS.