Co-op Job Summary

For my co-op I am working at Primet Precision Materials in Ithaca. This turned out to be convenient in terms of housing and social activities, since I was able to live in a Collegetown apartment with friends who were at school taking classes this semester. Transportation to work for me was also easy because I have a car; an alternative would be to take the TCAT buses.

Primet makes materials that are used in batteries. The company does a significant amount of research for improvement in addition to producing materials. I was able to be a part of the production process, learning how to run some of the machines that are part of the process and work directly with the materials. I was also able to do some work on the research side of things. I have tables full of data gathered on different samples for analysis. I compiled these tables, then took the data and searched for correlations between variables. I plotted graphs and presented some of the information I found to engineers at the company, or to my supervisor. My supervisor was very approachable and I usually went to her with questions, unless it was a question about a specific task I was performing in the lab, in which case I went to the person who trained me on it.

Training at the company consisted of safety training as well as training on how the company works on my first day, and then learning how to run machines for production and test properties of the materials. The safety training was done on the morning of my first day along with a tour of the facility. I was also given an introduction into what specifically the company does and how it functions. Learning how to run machines and perform tests on the materials happened throughout my term. Almost every week I was trained on something new, to expand what I could do for the company.

This position fit my major and interests well. Doing research on and improving materials is obviously very interesting to me as a Materials Science major. Working on materials in an industry as important as battery production is a great experience. For me personally, the experience helped in making the decision of whether to try to work immediately after graduation or try to go directly to graduate school. It also helped me realize the importance of writing down your procedure and results in a lab setting. Collecting data in order to analyze proved to be extremely easy when all the results had been recorded and organized correctly. However, when something was missing it proved difficult to track down more often than not. I also learned the importance of asking questions when unsure about a task, or if something doesn’t seem right. Doing so can correct small missteps before they become larger problems.
For me, the only downside to the experience was that I didn't get the feel of working at a larger company. The company is quite small, and I have never had the experience of working for anything larger, which I would have liked to so I can make a more informed decision of the type of company I want to work for in the future.

My favourite parts of the job were the opportunity to do work that is important to the company rather than relatively meaningless tasks, as well as the array of work I was able to do. I was made a part of both the production and analysis processes, and therefore had the chance to both run machines and work with the material in a lab as well as analyze numbers in more of an office setting.