


**Name:** Gregory Wu

**Major:** Electrical and Computer Engineering

**Employer:** Cisco Systems

**Co-op Term:** 5/29/2006 – 1/12/2007

**Co-op Signature:** 

**Supervisor Signature:** 

## **Cisco Job Description**

At Cisco Systems, I am a member of the CALO division, which stands for Customer Advocacy Lab Operations. We support TAC, or Technical Assistance Center, which is the umbrella department for all technical support for Cisco products. On a daily basis, I work directly with engineers who provide real time troubleshooting for customers who have purchased our technology, ranging from large corporations such as Verizon, Lehman Brothers, and AT&T to small local businesses.

My primary job responsibility is to provide engineers with exactly what they need to recreate an issue, either hardware or software, that has been brought forth by one of our customers. Engineers will enter cases on a queue that has specifications for the topology of the recreate, consisting mainly of device numbers, images, and cards. As co-ops, we monitor this case queue and work with millions of dollars worth of Cisco equipment to gain hands-on experience in connecting routers, switches, and traffic generators at the physical and data link layers (layers 1 and 2 of the OSI model).

In addition to supporting engineers, my responsibilities include maintaining and updating the Inventory Tracking Management and System for equipment in the labs, providing general lab infrastructure support, enforcing lab policies, assisting with ISO compliance, mentoring newer co-ops, and conducting interviews to recruit for the co-op position. With four major labs in our building alone, we constantly need to scan and update our inventory lists to keep track of the equipment that is being used. Lastly, it is imperative for us to transfer our knowledge as senior co-ops to the next round of new hires because it is very common that they will have no prior networking experience, which it was in my case.

In terms of training, Cisco is excellent in providing resources for the co-ops. We are able to speak directly to engineers who are experts and the leaders in the networking industry on a daily basis; this provides an unlimited wealth of knowledge that can be obtained from them. As co-ops we could also attend a wide range of presentations by engineers that focus on a specific line of Cisco products. This training was extremely beneficial because since I had no networking experience, it allowed me to catch up and contribute to the team effectively.

During the first few weeks of my rotation, there were definitely times where I had no idea what I was doing. However, being in a group of fifteen co-ops, I never had the feeling of asking a stupid question and was able to gain most of my knowledge through my fellow co-workers. The other mentors of our group were primarily the permanent engineers in our department and the queue monitor, who was given the responsibility and leadership role of being the first person to ask if you have a major issue with a case.

As I mentioned earlier, my education in electrical and computer engineering was not very relevant to the work I did on this co-op. There were several instances when studying for my CCNA certification that I did see an overlap in my curriculum, however, it was still for the most part new material. The networking industry is very technically challenging and I have a better understanding after working here for why they primarily recruit from the electrical engineering background.

Working for Cisco has definitely changed my professional outlook. Prior to this co-op, I was not quite sure what I wanted to do in terms of a job. This position has definitely propelled me into the networking industry and has given me a path that I would like to pursue. It has also influenced my personal development; the position really requires initiative because we basically work at our own pace with no one looking over our shoulders. It is completely our choice to take more cases and have a higher workload if we please. I have learned to work much more efficiently and independently, which are skills that are absolutely essential to a successful career. If I had something to change about this experience in hindsight, I guess I would have tried to take more cases even though I was able to establish myself as one of the top case takers in the group.

For life outside of the co-op, Cisco was not that helpful in finding housing. They did offer a list of places that had corporate discounts, but it was not that well organized. I would highly recommend extending contact as I did prior to arriving to arrange housing with fellow co-ops as roommates. I feel as though it provided a complete experience to the job because I was also able to meet new people from different backgrounds (one roommate from Wisconsin and another from RPI). We were able to settle on a very inexpensive apartment a mile away from the Cisco site that worked out very nicely for us.

Though we all could choose to carpool, the three of us did have different time schedules and chose to drive three separate cars to work. However, being so close to work, we could easily walk, jog, run, or bike every morning.

The opportunities for a social life were close to college life. There were many times where the co-ops went out together to Chapel Hill to join the college scene on Franklin Street. We also had a nice diverse group of people that are able to get along socially, which I believe is considered extremely important to the Cisco culture. Lastly, the best features of this job were endless; great atmosphere, fun people to work with, respectable pay with paid time off, and the opportunity to work with the industry leaders. I have nothing but praise for this job and I am extremely appreciative that I was able to get this opportunity to work here.