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Georgia Tech Site Visit Summary Report

Year-Round Student Experience, Co-op, and Internship Programs
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Visit Date: February 23, 2026

Overview and Introduction

This report summarizes observations and reflections from the Cal Poly leadership site visit to the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), focused on year-round student experience, co-op and internship programs, and the institutional structures that support experiential learning throughout the academic year.

Georgia Tech was selected as a peer learning institution because it represents a mature, large-scale model of year-round experiential learning embedded within a semester calendar. Its approach reflects decades of institutional investment, centralized coordination, and a distinct labor and governance environment. Its value for Cal Poly lies in clarifying what becomes necessary to support experiential learning at scale.

As a public research university (R1), founded in 1885, with an enrollment of approximately 45,000 to 48,000 students across undergraduate, graduate, and online programs, Georgia Tech operates on a semester academic calendar (fall, spring, and summer). With established co-op and internship programs, Georgia Tech provides insight into centralized governance and staffing models that support continuous operations; policies that preserve student enrollment, financial aid, and insurance status during work terms; academic scheduling aligned with alternating study and work rotations; operational considerations across housing, facilities, advising, and student services; equity mechanisms that support student access; and long-term student and employer outcomes associated with sustained experiential learning.

The Cal Poly visit to Georgia Tech offered an opportunity to observe how a large, highly selective public university has built a year-round student experience anchored in experiential learning. Georgia Tech's model presented a broader institutional approach to helping students "learn by doing" across the full arc of their undergraduate experience, deeply institutionalized and clearly communicated to students.

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Participants (Cal Poly SLO)

The Cal Poly team included administrators and faculty representing Academic Affairs, Strategic Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Strategic Initiatives and Advocacy, the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, the Philosophy Department, and the Academic Senate Faculty Affairs Committee.

- Jessica (Jess) Darin, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives & Advocacy
- Albert (Al) Liddicoat, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Terrance Harris, Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management and Student Affairs
- Marc Swackhamer, Dean, College of Architecture & Environmental Design
- Josh Machamer, Assistant Vice President, Strategic Initiatives and Advocacy
- Rachel Fernflores, Professor of Philosophy; Director and Project Manager of Semester Conversion
- Kenneth (Ken) Brown, Associate Professor and Chair, Philosophy Department; Chair of the Academic Senate Faculty Affairs Committee

A Year-Round Student Experience

One of the clearest observations from the visit was that Georgia Tech's approach is framed around the student journey rather than around a calendar conversion, "creating a year-round student experience, rather than simply operating year-round." Students involved in the formalized co-op/internship experiences do not remain on one fixed path for four years; instead, they rotate between academic terms and work experiences. This rotation appears to be designed in part to maintain enrollment balance across major terms, while also allowing students to take advantage of co-op and internship opportunities when they arise.

Experiential Learning

Information shared by Georgia Tech highlights that participation in co-ops and internships is not required, but rather part of an opt-in, student-driven approach to experiential learning. Within this model, experiential learning is broadly embedded across the undergraduate experience, with multiple pathways available for students to engage based on their interests and goals. These opportunities include first-year and transfer seminars,

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living-learning communities, undergraduate research, internships, co-ops, and community-based learning.

In the past year alone, Georgia Tech reported 2,025 students participating in internships or co-ops, 2,931 participating in undergraduate research opportunities, and 3,677 participating in vertically integrated projects. Additional participation included 1,844 students in first-year seminars (GT 1000), 382 in transfer seminars (GT 2000), 487 in the Ignite summer program, and 3,651 students in living-learning communities.

These figures reinforce the observation that experiential learning at Georgia Tech is not housed within a single area, such as a specific academic program, major, or department, but is instead embedded across multiple programs, colleges, and touchpoints throughout the undergraduate experience.

Summer structure

Georgia Tech's summer, while meaningful, is not equivalent to the fall and spring term structures, shorter academically with some co-op experiences correspondingly shorter as well. However, Georgia Tech's summer works because it is integrated into a broader institutional system rather than treated as a stand-alone add-on. It also functions as an important term for bridge and transition programming, particularly Georgia Tech's Ignite program for incoming students. The Ignite Program is a structured summer entry program that allows incoming first-year students to begin their academic experience early, take initial coursework, and transition into university life before the start of the fall term, serving students who begin in the summer by choice as well as those who use the term to strengthen their academic preparation, particularly in mathematics.

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Scale and Participation

The scale of Georgia Tech's co-op and internship activity (see Figure 1) shows that undergraduate internships significantly outnumber co-ops each year. In 2025–26, Georgia Tech reported 638 undergraduate co-op registrations and 1,578 undergraduate internship registrations. Earlier years show similar patterns, including 1,863 internship registrations in 2022–23 and 1,015 co-op registrations in 2019–20.

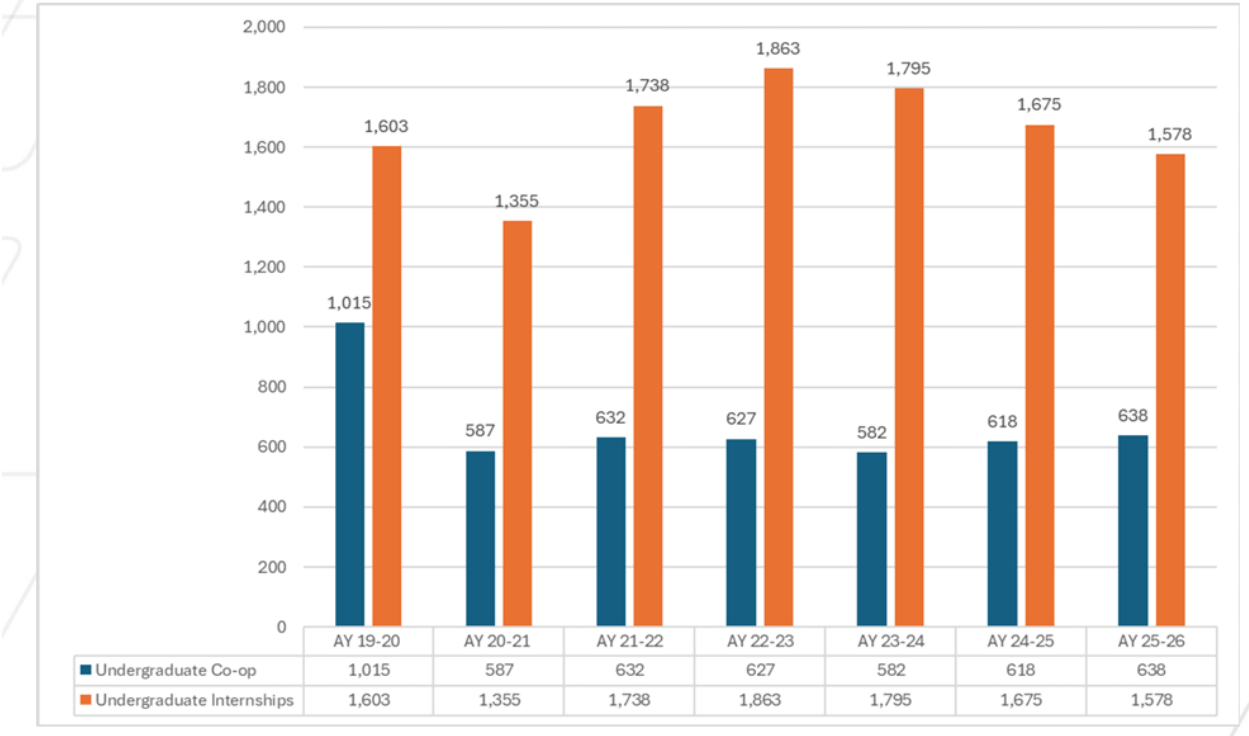

Figure 1. Undergraduate co-op and internship registrations at Georgia Tech by academic year. *This chart illustrates that undergraduate internships consistently outnumber co-ops, while both remain a visible part of the student experience over time.*

Participation is not evenly distributed across colleges. Figure 2 below shows that the College of Engineering and the College of Computing account for the largest share of involvement. Engineering, which represents 49.65% of undergraduate enrollment at Georgia Tech, accounts for 56.72% of co-op and internship registrations from fall 2022 through fall 2025. Computing, which represents 20.24% of undergraduate enrollment, accounts for 29.09% of registrations.

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College	2025-2026 Undergrad Enrollment	% of Undergrad Students	Number of Fall 2022 – Fall 2025 Undergrad Co-op & Internship Registrations	% of Fall 2022 – Fall 2025 Undergrad Co-op & Internship Registrations	Percentage Difference
College of Sciences	2,480	13.01%	253	3.44%	-9.57%
College of Liberal Arts	1,005	5.27%	241	3.27%	-2%
College of Design	748	3.92%	72	0.98%	-2.94%
College of Engineering	9,467	49.65%	4175	56.72%	+7.07%
College of Business	1,509	7.91%	479	6.51%	-1.4%
College of Computing	3,860	20.24%	2141	29.09%	+8.85%
Totals	19,069	100.00%	7361	100.01%	

Figure 2. Undergraduate Enrollment & Co-op/Internship Registration at Georgia Tech.
The table highlights the concentration of participation in engineering and computing and shows how experiential learning engagement differs across academic units.

Organizational Structure and Campus Coordination

Georgia Tech supports co-op and internship participation through an institutionally defined structure, placing the Undergraduate Co-op and Internship Team at the intersection of the Career Center and the Office of Experiential & Engaged Learning.

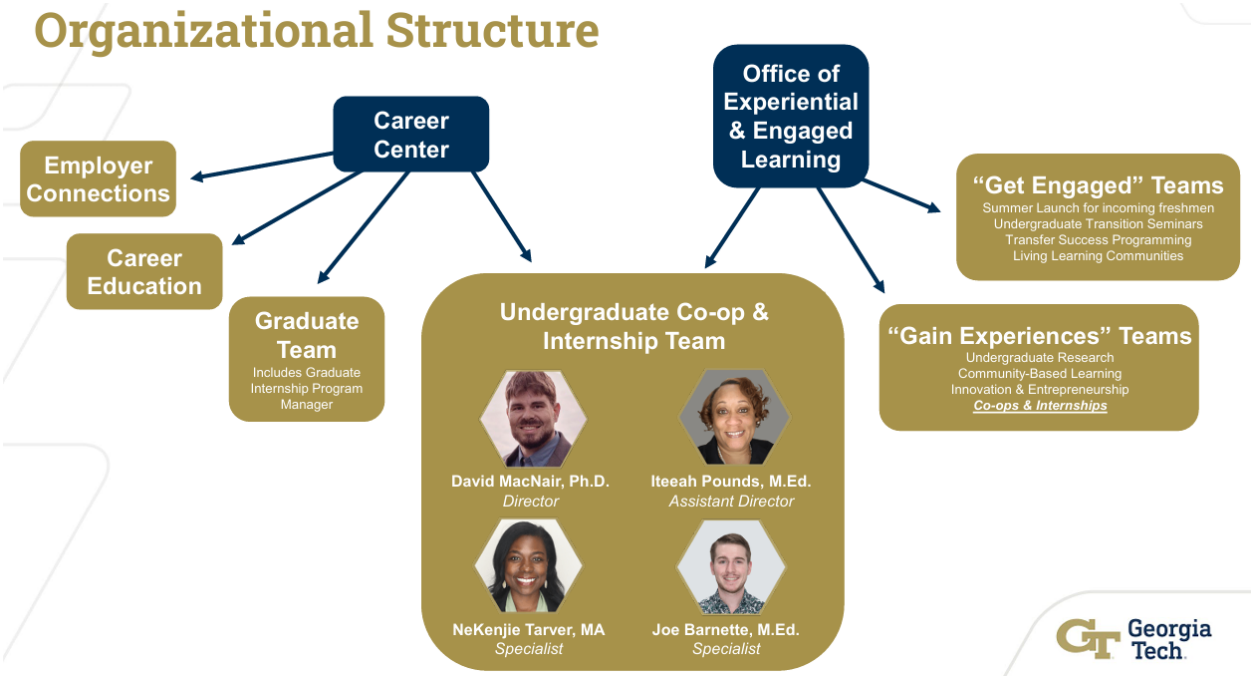

Figure 3. Organizational structure supporting co-op and internship programs at Georgia Tech. *This diagram illustrates the relationship between the Career Center, the Office of Experiential & Engaged Learning, and the Undergraduate Co-op and Internship team.*

The organizational structure identifies a four-person undergraduate co-op and internship team led by a director and assistant director, supported by specialists, within a larger network that also includes Career Education, Employer Connections, Graduate programs, and "Get Engaged" and "Gain Experience" teams.

Georgia Tech describes this approach as a "Two Offices → One Co-op & Internship Team" model, in which the Career Center and Experiential & Engaged Learning operate in close coordination. The Career Center provides career preparation, job search support, and employer engagement, while Experiential & Engaged Learning contributes programmatic partnerships and a broader ecosystem of experiential opportunities.

Observations consistently highlight the strength of this shared structure, particularly the clarity of roles and the collective ownership of outcomes across campus partners. There is a strong sense of alignment in both mission and execution, with partners operating from a common understanding of purpose and priority. The result is a coordinated, intentional approach in which the Career Center serves not only as a central hub, but as a strategic collaborator within a broader, well-integrated system. Georgia Tech organizes support for

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co-op and internship experiences through important collaborations with key campus partners, including the Registrar's Office, Office of International Education, Housing, Academic Advising, and the Bursar's Office, all of which play active roles in the process. During peak registration periods, some of these units communicate daily with the co-op and internship team to ensure timely coordination and support for students. This level of engagement reflects more than operational coordination; it represents a shared institutional commitment and collective ownership of the student's experience.

Faculty Classifications & Structure

Georgia Tech employs a differentiated faculty model to support year-round experiential learning while preserving traditional academic roles. Tenure-track (TT) faculty remain on academic-year (AY) appointments, focusing on teaching, research, and service primarily during the Fall and Spring terms, with summer teaching typically optional and compensated separately. In parallel, Georgia Tech relies on 12-month academic professional faculty (non-tenure track) to deliver and sustain co-op and internship programs across all three terms. These roles combine instruction, advising, and program administration, providing continuity for experiential learning without overextending tenure-track faculty. Lecturers further support course delivery as needed.

This structure allows Georgia Tech to maintain year-round operations through specialized staffing, ensuring that experiential learning is continuously supported while shared governance and academic responsibilities remain anchored within the academic year. The model reflects a deliberate separation between academic instruction and experiential program delivery, enabling scalability and operational stability.

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Category	Georgia Tech Model
Tenure-Track Faculty	Academic-year appointments; teaching, research, and service primarily in Fall and Spring
12-Month Faculty	Academic Professionals (non-tenure track) supporting co-op and internship programs year-round
Lecturers	Non-tenure track instructional faculty supporting course delivery
Experiential Learning Delivery	Led primarily by 12-month faculty roles
Summer/Off-Term Coverage	Supported by 12-month faculty and select instructional roles
Governance	Maintained within academic-year faculty structure
Structural Approach	Differentiated model separating academic and experiential roles

Figure 4. Georgia Tech Faculty Model Overview. *This table provides an overview of Georgia Tech's differentiated faculty model, which separates traditional academic roles from experiential learning delivery.*

Registration, Audit Enrollment, and Student Status

For students to receive credit and formal recognition, the co-op and internship registration process (described in Figure 4) goes through an intentional structured set of checkpoints, moving in a clear sequence from application through enrollment.

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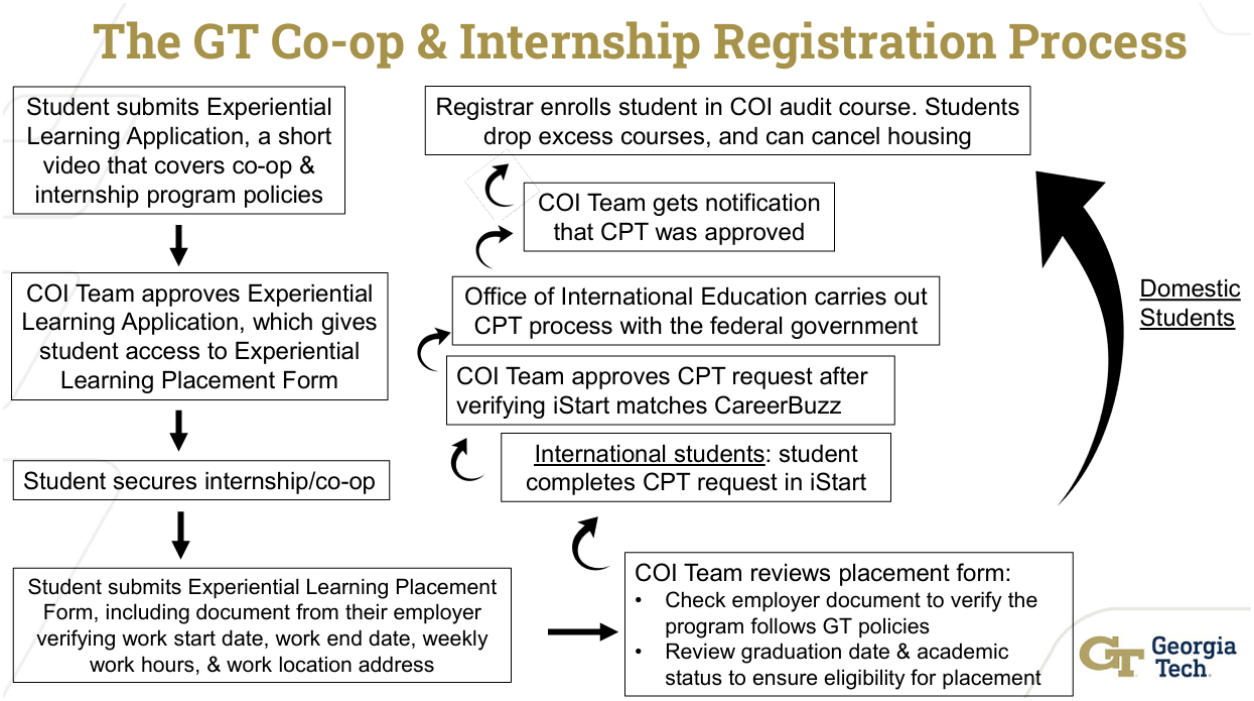

Figure 5. Georgia Tech co-op and internship registration process. *The process includes application, placement verification, institutional review, and audit-course enrollment, with additional steps for international students.*

Students begin by submitting an experiential learning application, then secure a co-op or internship (key to point out – students find their own opportunities). These often are through posting via the Career Center but may also include openings outside of that mechanism. Next, they complete a placement form that includes employer verification of dates, hours, and work location. From there, the co-op and internship team reviews the submission, confirms eligibility, and works with the Registrar to enroll the student in an audit course. For international students, the process includes additional coordination with the Office of International Education to obtain Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization.[1]

These audit-based placeholder courses are central to how the Georgia Tech model operates. While they do not carry tuition or graded credit, they ensure that co-op and

[1] Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a form of work authorization available to F-1 international students that permits participation in internships, cooperative education (co-op) programs, and other work-based learning experiences when such activities are integral to the student's academic curriculum.

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internship experiences are formally recorded on the student's transcript, allowing students to maintain continuous enrollment during their work terms.

At Georgia Tech, the co-op program follows a structured sequence of alternating academic and work terms. To receive formal co-op recognition, students are required to complete a minimum of three full-time, paid work rotations with the same employer, typically across fall, spring, and/or summer terms, with at least two rotations occurring during the academic year. This sequence represents a sustained, integrated work-based learning experience rather than a single-term placement. Students who complete these requirements earn a formal co-op designation (often referred to as a Cooperative Plan designation), which is noted on their academic record and diploma.

Within this structure, the distinction between co-ops and internships is clearly defined. Co-ops follow a prescribed, multi-term pathway with specific requirements and formal recognition upon completion. Internships, by contrast, are more flexible in structure, allowing students to engage in one or more work experiences, often with different employers, without a required sequence or formal designation tied to completion.

Georgia Tech's audit structure stands out as both a distinctive strength and a source of complexity within the model. It is closely tied to full-time work expectations while allowing students to remain enrolled without incurring tuition or fees. At the same time, this approach introduces financial considerations, as audit enrollment does not inherently align with standard financial aid mechanisms, requiring additional coordination to support students effectively.

Financial Aid, Affordability, and Student Support

Financial aid is one of the most consequential and complex dimensions of Georgia Tech's co-op model, shaping both student participation and overall accessibility. At Georgia Tech, financial aid eligibility is fundamentally tied to credit-bearing enrollment, even though students may maintain full-time status during co-op or internship terms. Students are considered full-time when enrolled in approximately 12 units per term, which supports institutional reporting, loan deferment, and insurance eligibility. However, during co-op (work) terms, students are typically enrolled in 12 audit (non-credit) units, which preserve

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full-time status but do not count toward degree-applicable coursework for financial aid purposes.

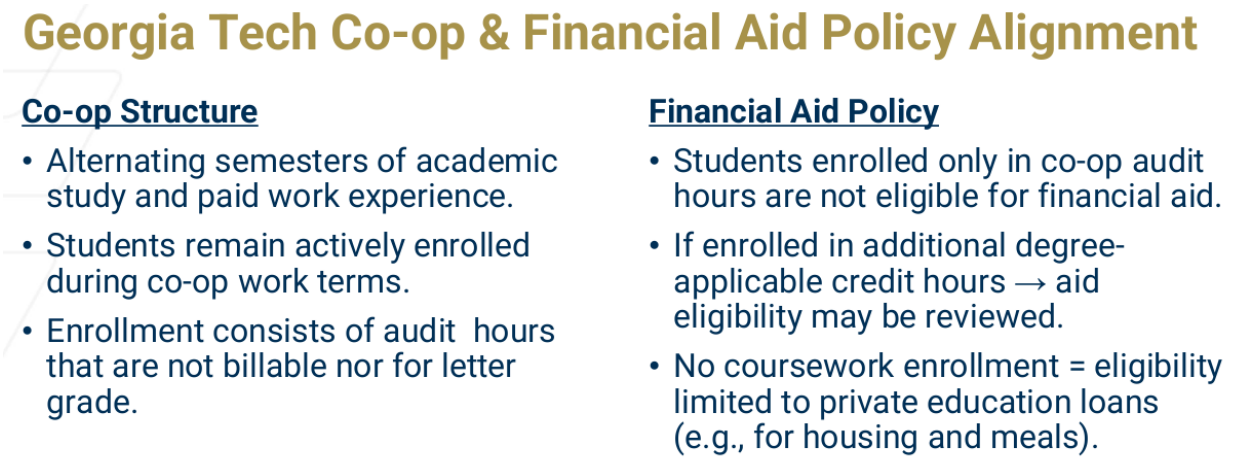

Figure 6. Co-op structure and financial aid alignment at Georgia Tech.
This outline how Georgia Tech uses audit enrollment to maintain student status while also creating distinct financial aid considerations during work terms.

As illustrated in Figure 6, this model establishes a clear tradeoff: students maintain enrollment and receive transcript recognition for experiential learning, but financial aid eligibility is limited during periods without concurrent academic coursework. In practice, students who wish to retain access to financial aid often pair their work terms with degree-applicable courses, though this may not always be feasible depending on program structure and workload expectations.

As a result, affordability during co-op participation is supported through a hybrid financial model. Students primarily rely on paid co-op employment, which serves as the central financial support mechanism during work terms. This may be supplemented by private loans, personal savings, or limited scholarships and stipends, particularly for students participating in lower-paid, public sector, or nonprofit roles. While this model can reduce long-term debt through earnings, it also introduces variability in student financial stability, especially for those with limited access to financial safety nets.

Within this framework, financial aid is not a peripheral consideration but a defining feature of how the model operates in practice. The effectiveness and accessibility of the co-op structure depend not only on its academic and operational design, but also on the extent to which students are able to navigate and sustain participation financially. From a structural perspective, Georgia Tech's model reflects an "employment-replacement" approach to

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financial aid, where wages earned during work terms effectively substitute for traditional aid.

Term Type	Enrollment Status	Financial Aid Eligibility	Primary Student Support
Study Term	Credit-bearing units (typically 12+)	Eligible for full financial aid	Financial aid, scholarships
Work (Co-op) Term	12 audit units (non-credit, full-time status)	Not eligible (unless taking credit courses)	Paid co-op wages, private loans, limited stipends

Figure 7. Enrollment and Financial Aid Structure at Georgia Tech.
This table summarizes how Georgia Tech structures enrollment and financial aid across academic and co-op terms. While students maintain full-time status during work terms through audit enrollment, financial aid eligibility is determined by participation in credit-bearing coursework.

Student Preparation, Reflection, and Success

Georgia Tech's model places strong emphasis on preparing students before they begin their work experiences and maintaining structured engagement while they are away. As part of that established procedure (outlined in Figure 6), students set goals, complete mid-term check-ins, submit a work report, and receive a supervisor performance evaluation. These activities, supported through platforms such as Canvas[2] and CareerBuzz[3], combine quantitative ratings with open-ended reflection to help connect work experiences to student learning and development.

[2] Canvas is the primary Learning Management System (LMS) used at Georgia Tech, basically the central online platform used to support teaching and learning.
[3] CareerBuzz is Georgia Tech's primary career services platform where students access job and internship opportunities, employers recruit and post positions, and the university manages co-op and internship processes.

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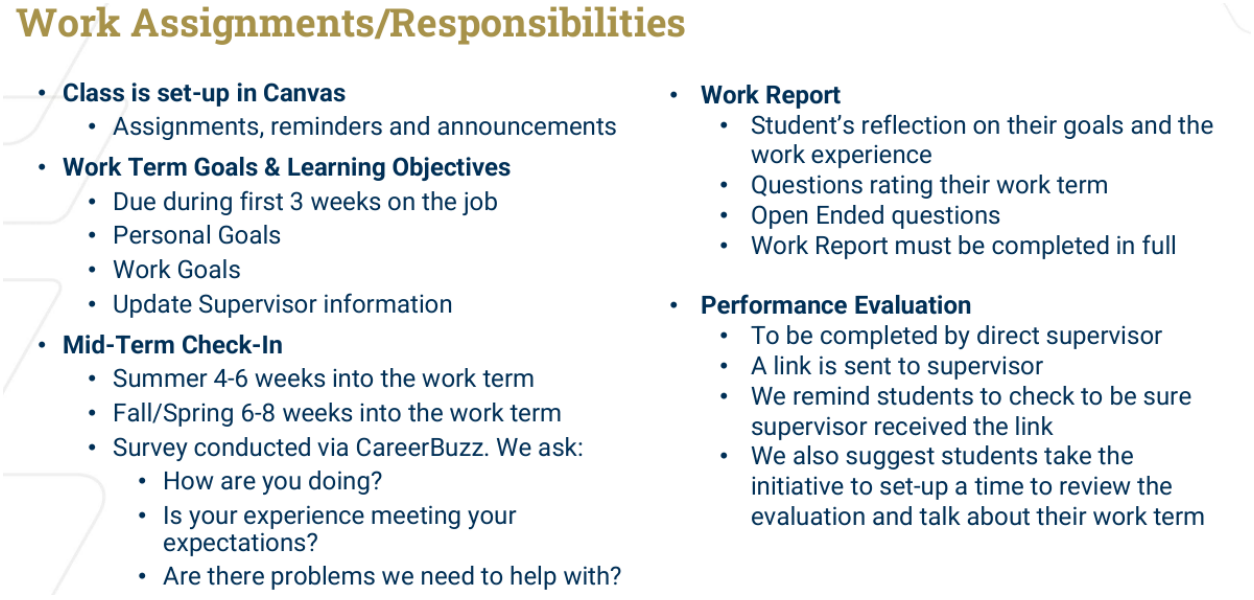

Figure 8. Student work-term assignments and responsibilities in Georgia Tech's co-op and internship program. *The model includes structured reflection, supervisor evaluation, and regular check-ins that connect work experiences to student learning and development.*

Preparation begins well in advance of the work term and is reinforced through a range of coordinated programming. This includes recurring "Co-op & Internship 101" webinars led by student ambassadors, staff-facilitated "102" sessions, and targeted workshops ("How to Get Paid to Do Cool Stuff" and "Where Are GT Students Interning?") focused on aspects of opportunity awareness and career navigation. Larger-scale events, including expos, employer engagement events, and honors luncheons, further support student readiness and connection to opportunities. Mentorship and advising are embedded throughout, helping students navigate workplace expectations, build professional confidence, and balance the desire for both flexibility and structure in their experiences.

Within this framework, success is defined broadly. In addition to securing placements, it encompasses skill development, professional network growth, and meaningful, high-quality work experiences. Structured supervision, clear project expectations, and opportunities for continued employment further reinforce positive outcomes for both students and employers.

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Marketing, Visibility, and Employer Engagement

Visibility of co-op and internship opportunities at Georgia Tech is intentionally cultivated through a coordinated, multi-channel approach. Outreach efforts span social media, print and digital materials, newsletters, classroom presentations, student organizations, and on-campus engagement. Dedicated staff lead these efforts, with student workers extending reach and peer-to-peer visibility. The Briaerean Honor Society, Georgia Tech's co-op and internship honor society, is another key outlet by recognizing high-achieving participants and supporting awareness through mentoring, professional development, and involvement in major events.

Employer engagement operates within a similarly intentional and distributed structure. The Career Center provides core infrastructure through tools and services such as CareerBuzz, information sessions, interviews, career fairs, and corporate partnerships. Beyond this, Georgia Tech maintains a broad ecosystem of industry connections, including research collaborations, executive education, licensing, sponsorships, startup engagement, and co-location opportunities that bring employers physically closer to campus.

Several key features define this approach:

- A wide-reaching, multi-channel strategy for student-facing marketing and visibility
- Strong employer relationships supported by both centralized infrastructure and distributed engagement
- An extensive industry ecosystem that connects experiential learning to research, innovation, and workforce development
- The presence of anchor employers and an active alumni network that sustain long-term engagement
- A model that emphasizes student agency, with institutional support focused on preparation, access, and connection rather than direct placement

Together, these elements reflect a model in which visibility, access, and opportunity are intentionally cultivated, while students are expected to take an active role in navigating and securing their experiential learning pathways.

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International Students and Global Infrastructure

Supporting international students is a significant and highly coordinated component of Georgia Tech's model, requiring close alignment between the Career Center and the Office of International Education. This coordination includes regular communication and a structured process for managing Curricular Practical Training (CPT), a type of work authorization for international students (F-1 visa holders) that allows them to participate in internships, co-ops, and work-based learning experiences as part of their academic program. Georgia Tech manages a high volume of CPT requests each term, with summer being the heaviest period. The volume of requests requires a detailed, step by step CPT review and auditing process, with cross-system verifications between platforms such as CareerBuzz and iStart[4] to ensure accuracy and compliance.

The scale and intentionality of this work reflect the broader infrastructure required to support a large international student population. Processes are clearly defined and distinct from those for domestic students, with specialized coordination and compliance embedded throughout. This level of support highlights the need for similarly intentional approaches for other student populations with specific requirements. Global experiential learning is further extended through programs such as the Global Research and Internship Program (GRIP), which connects students to international opportunities through established partnerships and comprehensive support structures, including advising, visa support, and emergency support while students are abroad. Colleagues at Georgia Tech describe GRIP as having supported more than 1,000 students in more than 180 countries since 2005. The program combines company partnerships, advising, visa support, and emergency support while students are abroad. While study abroad was not explored in-depth, participants clearly saw that international experience is still an important piece of Georgia Tech's approach to experiential learning, reinforcing the institution's commitment to access, coordination, and student success at scale.

[4] iStart is Geogia Tech's online system used to manage immigration-related processes for international students, including work authorization such as Curricular Practical Training.

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Summary

The visit underscored both what is possible and what is required to support co-ops and internships at scale. Overall impressions point to a high level of appreciation for the maturity, intentionality, and complexity of Georgia Tech's model: notably structured, with clear processes for registration, strong institutional coordination, and well-defined pathways, particularly in disciplines where employer demand and curricular alignment are strongest. Just as important, its effectiveness seems to rest on a shared, campus-wide commitment to experiential learning, supported by sustained investment in infrastructure, staffing, and partnerships over time.

These broader impressions were reinforced through several key features observed during the visit, including:

- The scale of co-op and internship participation
- The role of centralized and coordinated support structures
- The formal process of registration management and audit enrollment
- The breadth of collaboration across campus and with employers
- The integration of student preparation, mentoring, support, and administrative coordination

Taken together, the visit makes clear that Georgia Tech's co-op and internship system functions not as a collection of programs, but as a fully developed institutional ecosystem that has been built over time through alignment, investment, and a clear, student-centered vision.