Tips for Transitioning from College to Work

You’ve accepted an offer—congratulations! Now what? Here is a checklist and tips to help you transition successfully from life as a college student to life as a professional engineer.

Before your first day:

- Register your internship or co-op with ECS to ensure you receive the full benefits
- Ask your new employer about what they provide for relocation assistance
- Ask your employer about housing assistance or options
- Update bank and other accounts with new address
- Notify utilities of cancellation/transfer of services
- Schedule movers, moving van or shipping container
- Confirm start details with your new employer
- Obtain visa/permit, if necessary
- File a change-of-address form with the USPS for up to a year of permanent or temporary mail forwarding
- Determine transportation options to and from work
- Secure temporary storage for your belongings
- Finish your lease requirements or sublet your apartment if necessary

Settling in at your new job:

- Take time to familiarize yourself with the office/company policies by attending orientation and/or reading the company handbook.
- Making note of the wardrobe requirements and policies, evaluate what you need to add. You will likely need clothes for both office/presentation work and plant/industrial work.
- Have realistic expectations. You will likely start with minor tasks. Maintain a positive and enthusiastic view of your work and, when you have time, volunteer to help others.
- Ask your supervisor about prioritizing tasks and the flexibility of your schedule.

During your first month and beyond:

- **Dependability** – Show that you can handle responsibility and meet deadlines. Be a reliable, helpful, engaged team member who adds to the project.
- **Communication** – Proofread emails; ensure you have a clear idea of your manager’s expectations; discuss progress with colleagues during group work; contribute ideas when appropriate.
- **Appreciation** – Say thank you often and be kind. Don’t be afraid to use a handwritten thank you note on quality stationary when the occasion calls for it. Stand out for all the right reasons.
- **Professionalism** - Don’t be overly critical, disagree in a positive way, and avoid office gossip.
- **Documentation** – Write down helpful information, answers to questions, questions you have and more. Don’t just rely on your memory. This will be of great help if you need to contribute to an annual report or need to repeat something on a future project. It will also be very helpful in writing quality skills-based work impact statements while updating your resume.
- **Education** – Always continue to learn within and outside of your area of expertise. It will help you work on interdisciplinary teams, engage customers and colleagues, and stay current in your work/industry.
- **Networking** – Seek opportunities (including casual networking in the break room or hallway), ask others for suggestions, initiate meetings with colleagues, and maintain these relationships. The goal is to identify experts and those with responsibility that you may need to collaborate with on future work.
- **Mentorship** – Find someone to help provide you with guidance and historical knowledge.