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Grant will help UM students get practical job experience

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University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Grant will help UM students get practical job experience" (1980). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 31630.
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marlbeth dwyer • news editor

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10/28/80
state + weeklies

IMMEDIATELY

GRANT WILL HELP UM STUDENTS GET PRACTICAL JOB EXPERIENCE

MISSOULA--

The University of Montana has been awarded a grant of \$54,790 by the U.S. Department of Education for a project to expand opportunities for UM students to acquire work experience that will help them find jobs upon graduation.

The project will be administered by Sue Spencer, who is director of continuing education and summer programs at the University. She said the concept of cooperative education has had the support of the Montana Board of Regents and the commissioner of higher education since 1976, but funding for staff and other resources needed to implement it has been lacking.

"The grant will enable us to coordinate and consolidate existing campus programs that give students practical work experience, such as the internships sponsored by many of our professional schools, and also develop new ones," Spencer said. "Barbara Olson, a specialist in cooperative education, has been hired to direct this effort."

Under a program set up with grant support to supplement established programs, students will register for classes, pay fees and, generally, receive academic credit while they work on a full-time job for one quarter. They will return to UM classes the following quarter and remain on campus until they take a second work assignment. They may not work two quarters in succession, but they must complete two work assignments of one quarter each before graduation.

The students are paid by the employers and given the same fringe benefits as regular employees. The amount of academic credit they earn is determined by their major departments at the University.

(over)

GRANT WILL HELP UM STUDENTS--add one

Olson says she will try to develop new job placements throughout the region, especially for liberal arts students.

"These students and employers may not be aware of what they have to offer each other," she pointed out. "For example, business firms and governmental agencies don't advertise for geographers, but they do hire urban-development and land-use management specialists--and the UM geography department trains students in these fields."

She says her office will serve as a clearinghouse for information for faculty, students and employers interested in cooperative study programs.

Spencer and Olson are enthusiastic about the benefits to students and employers made possible by the grant. They noted that students with work experience have an edge over those without it when they enter the job market. Another bonus for students in UM cooperative education programs is that many participating employers offer them the option of being hired as permanent employees when they graduate.

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