Job Acceptance Etiquette
**Job Acceptance Etiquette**

In today’s competitive job market, it is essential that job seekers tend to all stages of the job acquisition process with the utmost tact and professionalism. To that end, there are proper ways of conducting oneself throughout each step. Job seekers must strike a balance between demonstrating enthusiasm and sincere interest while providing the employer adequate time to process the many applications and resumes that they receive. Knowing when and how to communicate with employers is essential.

Regardless of where you are in your job search, how you conduct yourself provides the employer additional information about your professionalism as well as your ability to follow directions. Being informed about the employer’s timeframe for making a decision (and demonstrating patience) while conveying your continued interest without overstepping the bounds of tactfulness can be challenging.

Once a job offer has been extended to you there are several important steps that you must follow to properly accept or decline an offer. Maybe you’ve been fortunate to have more than one offer extended to you. During this stage, it is important that you do all you can to ensure you are well-informed and that you, in turn, keep the employer well-informed throughout your decision making process. You want to be certain to gather all facts and feel good about your decision and honor your commitment should you choose to accept an offer.

The pages that follow are intended to help you with how to navigate this oftentimes uncertain course, and it includes information on the following topics:

- Steps to Take Before and After Accepting an Offer
- Tactfully Declining an Offer
- Sample Declining an Offer Letter

Finally, the Engineering Co-op & Career Services office is here to support you as you navigate this complex process. Should you be in need of specific guidance, please stop by our office for assistance.
BEFORE ACCEPTING A JOB OFFER

Once you have been offered a position…

Show your appreciation. Be sure to show your appreciation of the offer, be tactful, and be careful….you may end up working for this person.

Gather the facts. Our advice is to not accept a job offer on the spot, rather take time to review all of your options. Now is the time to gather as much information about the offer including salary, job description, benefits, etc. Politely follow up via email (making sure to continue using the original email thread with the start of the email correspondence), briefly re-stating your question(s). Timeliness is crucial at this stage, especially when weighing the benefits of multiple offers or trying to gather all the details of a position you have accepted. Don’t be concerned about annoying the employer with your questions; the employer understands this and is happy to assist you during this process.

Take time to communicate. If you receive an offer, but are still waiting to hear from other employers, be sure to explain your situation and ask for an additional week or two to make a final decision. (Don’t wait until the last minute to ask for an extension; this looks like you are not planning ahead.) It is also appropriate to call any employers you are still waiting to hear back from to tell them you have received another offer and ask when they are planning to make their decision.

Don’t commit until you know the offer is legitimate. Before accepting a position, you need to determine that the offer is a legitimate one as opposed to a conditional offer. If your offer hinges on your passing a polygraph, for example, you will want to know this. You will also want to ensure that you are clear about the all the conditions that apply in offer (i.e. non-compete agreements, non-disclosure agreements, intellectual property restrictions, etc.). Do not sign anything you are unclear about.

Don’t accept unless and until you are sure. When an offer is extended to you and you have accepted it – whether verbally or in writing – you are obligated to that employer even if you get a better offer later. Telling an employer “no” after you already said “yes” is both unethical and unprofessional. Once you have accepted a job offer you may not consider any other positions. You should immediately stop interviewing, cancel any further interviews, and notify all employers who are still considering you.

AFTER ACCEPTING A JOB OFFER

Share your news with the Engineering Co-op & Career Services office. All students (not just co-op students) must notify the co-op office once they have accepted a position. If you don’t notify us, we will continue to send your resume to employers, which is a poor use of everyone’s time. It is also important for our office to know who we have helped! Co-op students are required to register for our 0-credit ENCO 098 or 099 course.
**TACTFULLY DECLINING A JOB OFFER**

Applying for positions through the Engineering Co-op Office does not obligate you to accept a job offer. However, if you choose to decline a job offer, do so courteously, in writing, after making a phone call to explain you are not accepting the job offer. Keep in mind these tips when declining a job offer:

- Avoid saying anything negative in writing about the employer, even if you had a negative experience.
- If you choose to decline an offer because another offer is a better fit for your interests and goals, it is fine to state this, without giving details about why the declined offer is not the best fit. It is not necessary to state whose offer you accepted, but you may do so if you wish.
- Remember that this employer may be a contact for you in the future. Be professional and courteous.

**Sample Decline Offer Letter**

```
123 Elm Street  
College Park, MD 20742  

March 18, 2008  

Ms. Patricia Blum  
TRB International  
1000 Wisconsin Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20007  

Dear Ms. Blum:  

Thank you for your call and letter offering me the position of Summer Intern with TRB International. While I appreciate the challenging opportunity you offer, I have received another offer which I believe more closely matches my current career goals and interests. Therefore, although it was a difficult decision, I must decline your offer. I do appreciate all the courtesy and hospitality extended to me by your office, and I wish you well in your endeavors.

In the position I have accepted with Woodson Consulting, I will be attending the IEEE Conference this July in Raleigh, NC, so I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,  

(Signature here)  

Joseph Ware  
```