QUICK GUIDE: Building a Robust Internship Program

What is an Internship?

**An internship is a monitored work experience that has intentional learning outcomes and goals for students.**

- The student is learning from a professional in their intended career field.
- The employer provides educationally enriching projects with learning objectives, mentoring, evaluation, quality training and supervision.
- The majority of job assignments should relate to the student’s major or career interests with minimal assignments involving clerical work.

An internship can vary in length, hours, and compensation.

- **Length:** semester, summer or year-long.
- **Hours:** part-time or full-time (10-40 hours per week).
- **Compensation:** paid, unpaid, stipend, housing or travel allowance.

The Difference between an Internship and a Part-time Job:

If a student is learning about marketing from the Marketing Director, it is an internship. If a student is doing the marketing for the organization, it is a part-time job.

(Doing the marketing for an organization is a great experience, but it is not an internship!)

How do students benefit from an internship?

- Builds students’ resumes and expands their network of professionals.
- Gives students an opportunity to apply academic concepts and principles to a work environment.
- Allows students to evaluate their career choice, either to continue on their present academic/career path or to consider other possibilities.
- Often times, students may receive academic credit from the University for the experience.

How does the organization benefit from having an internship program?

- Provides year-round source of highly motivated short-term pre-professionals.
- Opportunity to assess the capabilities of a prospective full-time employee prior to student’s graduation.
- Increases an organization’s visibility on campus.
- Creates connections and relationships with University faculty and staff.

Designing Your Program: Create an Internship Program that Meets Your Needs

*It is important that your internship program adheres to Department of Labor regulations. Consult your organization’s legal counsel on these regulations.*

Set goals: What does your organization hope to achieve by having an internship program?

- Are you a small organization searching for additional help on a project?
- Is your organization growing quickly and in need of motivated new employees?
• Are you a nonprofit that does not have a lot of money to pay, but can provide an interesting and rewarding experience?
• Are you searching for your organization’s future staff and leaders?

Create a well-developed structure for your internship program.
• What will the intern do? Be as specific as possible! Structured experiences are good experiences; otherwise, a student may become confused or bored.
• What academic background, skills, or experience do you seek?
• Who will hire, supervise, and mentor the intern?
• Will you pay the intern? Remember students incur expenses related to internship experiences including travel, parking, clothing, food, and possibly academic credit tuition.
• Is there adequate workspace for the intern? Where will they sit?
• Think beyond the intern’s defined responsibilities: will there be other professional development opportunities available, such as special training programs, lunches with executives and social events?

Draft a position description.
• Be sure the description clearly explains the intern’s duties.
• Include information about your organization and the location of the internship.
• Provide a timeframe for the internship, including start/end dates and typical working hours.
• Describe desired skills of applicants, coursework, and preferred majors if applicable.
• Include information on compensation.
• Provide application instructions and deadline.

Your Internship Program: Tips for Success Once the Intern is On-Site
• Discuss, determine, and agree on the learning objectives WITH the student intern.
• Plan an engaging orientation program that is effective for both interns and mentors/supervisors. Provide an overview of the organization’s mission, values, and structure. Consider setting up one-on-one meetings with the staff members the intern will interact with most.
• Be sure everyone involved has clear expectations, including: work hours, appropriate office attire, specific job responsibilities and organizational policies and procedures.
• Ensure job assignments are clear and related to the learning objectives.
• Try your best to fully incorporate the intern into the life of your organization (staff meetings, staff celebrations).
• Provide feedback along the way with regularly scheduled meetings.
• Select a professional in your office who cares about the development of students to supervise and/or mentor.
• Evaluate, document, and demonstrate the value of an internship program to your organization. This is important for the continued support and success of your internship program.

For University Career Center & The President’s Promise staff listing:
www.Careers.umd.edu/staff.cfm

For more information on how to build a robust internship program:
www.Careers.umd.edu/InternshipGuideForEmployers