

# What Do I Need to Know About Internships?

## What is an Internship?

- A period of practical training, carried out by a student within a company or organization
- “Learning by doing”
- Can be done remotely if it fits the situation
- In some industries, cooperative (co-op) programs best serve the needs of the company
- Also referred to as practicums, experiential learning opportunities, independent studies
- Many educational institutions group all of these under the term of “Experiential Education”

*“Tell me and I will forget, Show me and I may remember, Involve me and I will understand.” Chinese Proverb*

## Defining Co-op

- Experience must be related to the academic and career interests of the student and position must be full-time (32-40 hrs/wk); periods of class enrollment and work experience alternate every semester.
- Include new and/or increasing responsibilities with each new work term
- Educational delivery system is called “cooperative” because both the institutional advisor and the employer supervisor “cooperate” to provide the student this learning opportunity

## Benefits of Internships for Students\*

- Improve competencies and human relations skills
- Career trial
- Increased market value
- Build a professional network
- Obtain mentoring guidance
- Earn credit or money
- Apply classroom learning

*\* Internship Value: As quoted by college recruiter.com*

## Benefits of Internships for Employers\*

- Add student productivity
- Achieve higher level tasks
- Established recruitment pipeline
- Brings enthusiasm and fresh ideas
- Builds loyalty of future employees
- Prepare tomorrow’s workforce
- Broaden capabilities

*\* Internship Value: As quoted by college recruiter.com*

## How to Develop an Internship Program at Your Organization

*Here are some of the things we have learned about internships.*

## Options to Consider

- Credit vs. Non-credit
- Paid vs. Unpaid
- Part-time vs. Full-time
- Timing during the year
- Formal vs. Informal (Employer)

- Centralized vs. Decentralized (Colleges)

### How to Create an Effective Internship Program

STEP 1: Plan of Action

STEP 2: Internship Position Description

STEP 3: Recruiting and Legal Issues

STEP 4: Managing Interns

### AN EFFECTIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

#### STEP 1: PLAN OF ACTION

- A. Develop tangible goals and objectives
  - Project oriented
  - Exposure to daily operations
  - Cross- training - Rotation among departments
- B. Compensation
  - Paid vs. Unpaid
  - Academic Credit vs. Non-Credit
  - Stipend (transportation/parking/living expenses)
  - Work Schedule (full-time vs. part-time; virtual vs. physical)
- C. Supervision/Assessment
  - Who will have the primary responsibility for the intern?
- D. Beyond Office Hours
  - Networking Events
  - Presentation
  - Conferences

#### STEP 2: INTERNSHIP POSITION DESCRIPTION

- A. Intern Duties
  - Provide structure
  - Help to measure goals and accomplishments
- B. Challenging (but realistic) Work and Assignments (according to discipline, skills, abilities)
- C. Expectations
  - Outcomes of tasks
  - Projects performed and completed
- D. Requirements
  - Major, GPA
  - Class Standing (GR, SR, JR)
  - Specific Skills
  - Hours per week
  - Application and Selection Process

#### STEP 3: RECRUITING

- A. Start Early!
  - 3 to 4 months/ one semester in advance
- B. Recruitment Resources
  - College/ University Internship, Job, Events Database
  - Attend Events

- On- Campus Recruiting
- Information Sessions
- Academic Departments and Faculty
- Present to Student Clubs & Organizations

#### **STEP 4: MANAGING INTERNS**

- A. Orientation
  - Handbook
  - Tour & Introductions
  - One-on-One meetings/Lunch
  - Observe Professional/Staff meetings
  - Encourage Informational Interviews
- B. Supervision: Maintain an open channel of communication
  - Meet regularly to provide feedback
  - Opportunity to coach, counsel, and reinforce positive attitudes
  - Opportunities for increasing responsibility
  - Professionalism (interpersonal & communication skills, decision making, abilities, office politics)
  - Portfolio
- C. Evaluation (of intern)
  - Review the intern/job description
  - Review tasks and assignments and clarify expectations
  - Determine if assistance is needed to help the intern be successful
  - Ask the intern to evaluate his/her experience
  - Offer feedback and voice concerns as well as successes
- D. Evaluation (of program)
  - Exit Interviews
  - Turn ratio of interns returning as full-time employers
  - Request of interns by managers
  - Increase of Intern applicants

#### **LEGAL GUIDELINES FOR INTERNSHIPS – WHEN IS A STUDENT AN EMPLOYEE??**

##### **Criteria for an Experience to be Defined as an Internship\***

- The experience must be an extension of the classroom.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferrable to other employment settings.
- The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
- There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
- There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of experience.
- There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objective/goals.

\*NACE Position Statement: U.S. Internships, July 2011

##### **Bottom Line:**

Employers should check with their legal counsel to determine whether to compensate interns.

