

Employer's Guide to Developing an Internship

As with any successful endeavor, developing an internship requires thought and planning. We believe internships are beneficial to both employers and students. Internships are designed by employers to meet their own organizational needs while at the same time providing for the needs of the intern.

For students, an internship provides:

- An opportunity to apply what they've learned in the classroom to a real work experience
- An opportunity to explore different aspects of the "working" world and to investigate avenues of career interest
- Assistance with the development of specific skills and knowledge related to a career
- The ability to network and develop professional contacts in their area of interest
- A learning experience directly from experienced professionals

For employers, an internship provides:

- Enthusiastic, innovative, and dedicated workers who bring with them a fresh perspective and new ideas
- Assistance with special projects or during peak periods when additional staff are needed
- Access to students with special skills and/or knowledge
- A cost-effective means of evaluating performance and potential of employees prior to making them a permanent position offer
- An opportunity for current employees to develop their supervisory skills
- The personal satisfaction of helping students progress in their personal and career development

In order for an internship to be successful, both the site supervisor and the intern must understand how an internship differs from a job, and both must commit to working together to make the most of the opportunity.

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

The National Society for Experiential Education defines an internship as "a carefully monitored work or volunteer experience in which an individual has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience." These learning goals may include:

- Academic learning – the student can apply knowledge learned in the classroom to the workplace
- Career development – the student gains some knowledge or the qualifications and duties of a position and can explore their interest in a field
- Skill development – the student gains an understanding of the skills and knowledge required in the workplace
- Personal development – the student gains decision making skills, critical thinking skills, increased confidence and self-esteem

Interns should be encouraged to bring "intentional learning goals" that support their academic and career interests. UNH students can choose if they would like to receive academic credit for their internship experience or not. If a UNH student would like to receive credit, they must develop a plan to do so with their academic advisor in their major *prior* to beginning the experience. In most cases, as a site supervisor you will be asked to assist the intern and advisor in developing these goals. This ensures that the goals are reasonable and also indicates your commitment to helping the intern achieve these goals during the internship.

EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITIES BEFORE THE INTERNSHIP

1. Offer a true career-related experience that enhances academic and/or interest development.

Hiring an intern to perform busywork (filing, answering phones, data entry, etc.) is appropriate only when balanced with meaningful professional responsibilities. One of the biggest mistakes an employer makes is to

develop an internship opportunity that is extremely clerical in nature. Routine work is a part of every job and internships are no exception to this rule, but keep in mind that students expect to be challenged and learn new skills at their internship site and therefore become very disheartened when they find out that the position is not as advertised. You will want to make sure you have distinct objectives, goals, and/or projects for an intern.

2. Provide a position description that accurately describes the internship.

The UNH Internship Office accepts postings throughout the year (instructions for this process are listed at the end of this guide). By having a position description available, it gives you and the student the ability to clearly define the job duties that will be performed during this time-limited employment period.

3. Determine the length of the internship.

Once you have identified what the intern will do, you should then determine how much time you think it will take to accomplish the goals. We encourage employers and students to participate in internship experiences that are at least 3-4 months in length. Almost all of our internships are set up on a part-time basis (10-20 hours per week) during the academic year, allowing students to gain experience while maintaining a partial or full load of credits. Many students intern full-time during the summer months when they have the greatest amount of free time available.

4. Appoint someone to act as a mentor/supervisor during the experience.

It is very important that an intern has a designated site-mentor/supervisor. There should be one individual in the organization who acts as the overall mentor/supervisor. This individual will need to provide orientation, some training, supervision, evaluation/feedback and opportunities for reflection for the student. The mentor/supervisor should be the one responsible for educating the intern on the general philosophy and procedures of operation for the organization as a whole. This relationship also helps the company to thoroughly assess the student's work habits, ethics and productivity.

When choosing a site supervisor it is important to choose someone who:

- Is interested in working with college students
- Has the time to invest in the internship, especially during the first few weeks
- Has qualities such as leadership ability, effective communication skills, and patience

Ongoing supervision of the student intern is critical to the success of the internship!

An effective method of intern supervision is to have a set time -- weekly is recommended -- to meet with the intern to review progress on projects, check in, and provide feedback. Some supervisors do this during lunch; others choose a more formal setting depending on the culture of your organization and time constraints.

5. Provide safe working facilities.

Make available the equipment, supplies, and space necessary for the student to perform his/her duties. Ask yourself some of the following questions. Will the intern be here by themselves at any point during their working hours? Will the intern be leaving the facility when it is dark outside? If so, does the parking area have adequate lighting? Are all of our current employees educated on our sexual harassment/assault policies? Who is liable for work-related injuries sustained by the intern?

6. Determine how the intern will be compensated.

Although not a requirement for participating in the internship experience, it is desirable to compensate interns in some manner. Compensation comes in many forms. In some cases, interns are paid at or near the prevailing wage for an entry-level professional. Employers benefit by attracting the best applicants and maintaining a sense of accountability. It also helps students to focus on the internship because they do not have to work a second job and possibly attend school at the same time. In other cases, interns are paid a "training wage" that is at or above minimum wage. Some employers offer a stipend, which is typically a lump sum of money that is awarded regardless of the number of hours completed in an internship. Before offering a stipend, however, employers should check with state regulations concerning stipends to ensure that all appropriate regulations are being followed.

Under federal wage and labor laws, student interns do not need to be paid as long as six factors are met under the Learner Trainee criteria:

1. The training is similar to that which would be given in a vocational school.

2. The training is for the benefit of the students.
3. The students do not displace regular employees.
4. The employer derives no immediate advantage from the activities of students*.
5. The students are not entitled to a job at the end of the training period.
6. The employer and the student understand that the student is not entitled to wages.

* Shelly Kaplan, general counsel for the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), states in the Fall 2002 NACE Journal, p.7, "Several court rulings, while not addressing the criteria head on, seem to suggest that as long as the internship is a prescribed part of the curriculum, is part of the school's educational process, and is predominately for the benefit of the student, the fact that the employer receives some benefit from the student's services does not make the student an employee for purposes of wage and hour law."

Non-profit groups often cannot afford to pay an intern a wage, and so compensation in other forms should be considered. For example, an arts agency may provide the intern with free tickets to performances. Students who participate in a non-paid internship may need more flexibility in their hours or reduced hours so that they can earn wages through another job if necessary.

For many students, the most important compensation is the opportunity to learn real skills and contribute to the mission of the internship site. However, states have different regulations related to non-paid internships and compensation. If you have questions about the laws in your state, please check with the appropriate authorities. **New Hampshire employers can visit the NH Department of Labor website and view the Frequently Asked Questions** link www.labor.state.nh.us/faq.asp and click on the School-to-Work link for more information.

EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE INTERNSHIP

Training

Training is just as important as supervision. Develop a training program that will give the intern a clear understanding of what is expected, and include information about the duties that will be supervised and evaluated. To begin with, a well thought out orientation session will help to clarify goals and objectives while also providing the intern with information about the organization and the structure of the organization. The orientation session will also give the employer the opportunity to introduce the intern to the individuals they will be working closely with. Ongoing training is also important. Interns, as students, appreciate any opportunity to learn new skills or increase their knowledge. Developing a plan for training throughout the internship will keep students interested in the position and ready to tackle new challenges. Ongoing training may include the following: developing specific skill sets; job shadowing; active learning through questioning; attending professional conferences or association meetings.

Evaluation

Evaluation is important to an intern's development and is an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses. It is helpful if supervisors evaluate throughout the entire internship, not just at the end. The evaluation should be structured as a learning experience and an opportunity for bilateral feedback. Regularly scheduled evaluations help avoid common problems with internships, including miscommunication, misunderstanding of job roles, and lack of specific goals and objectives. You may find it helpful to schedule a preliminary evaluation very early in the internship (in the second or third week). This will help you understand whether the intern's orientation and training was sufficient, or if there are specific areas in which the intern has questions or needs further training.

Criteria for an employer to consider when evaluating an intern include:

- Progress towards or accomplishment of learning objectives
- Skill development or job knowledge gained over the course of the internship
- Overall contribution to the mission of the organization
- Dependability, punctuality, attendance
- Relations with others, overall attitude
- Potential in the field

The student should also evaluate the internship experience, which is important in determining the value of the work experience for future interns. Categories may include:

- Was there educational value or merit in the assignment?
- Did the position live up to its initial description?
- Was the supervisor receptive to your ideas?

- Does the experience relate to your academic or career goals?
- Did you receive a proper job orientation?
- Was the supervisor willing and/or capable of answering questions?
- Did you develop/enhance positive work habits?

COMPLETION OF THE INTERNSHIP

An internship should have a clearly stated end date that is identified before the internship begins. Completing a formal evaluation process such as the one described above can help both the site supervisor and the intern to put closure on the experience.

If you are considering hiring the intern for a full-time or part-time position, it is important to make this transition clear. It is not fair to the intern or co-workers to simply "extend the internship." Make the offer as you would with any employee, complete with a title change and a job description. As the person is now considered an employee with some degree of experience and more responsibility, it is normal practice to offer a pay raise when someone makes the leap from intern to employee.

HOW CAN THE UNH INTERNSHIP OFFICE HELP YOU?

The Internship Office, part of the University Advising and Career Center, acts as a clearinghouse for internship opportunities for the University of New Hampshire. UNH supports equal opportunity and access for all students, and therefore does not pre-screen students for internship positions. We have an online program where we list internship opportunities for student viewing. Once we receive a posting from an employer we immediately list it in MonsterTRAK and also send out a copy of the internship opportunity to the appropriate academic departments. From there, interested students contact the employer directly or as instructed on the internship posting. Most employers solicit resumes for review and then contact students to conduct interviews.

Employers who are interested in participating should provide the following information to the Internship Office through our online submission form: <http://www.unh.edu/uacc/formpages/internshiplisting.htm>

- Brief company overview
- Type of industry
- Position title
- Duties and responsibilities
- Qualifications and skills required/preferred (if any)
- Hours per week
- Compensation (if any)
- Start/end dates of internship (please list if it is an ongoing opportunity available year round)
- Any additional information that the employer deems important or interesting about the opportunity
- Contact information (name, title, mailing address, phone #, fax #, email, website address)

We prefer to receive postings via the online form listed above, however employers may also fax descriptions to (603) 862-2612, or send them through U.S. mail to: University of New Hampshire, Internship Office, 89 Main Street, 102 Hood House, Durham, NH 03824. **Jason Whitney, Internship Coordinator**, can be reached Monday through Friday, 8 – 4:30 P.M., at (603) 862-4136 or via email at internship.office@unh.edu to answer any questions you may have.

* Segments of this guide are credited to the Career Services Depts. at Colby-Sawyer College and Washington State University