
WHY HIRE INTERNS?

How can you meet the needs of your organization while helping prepare students for the future? One way is to

develop a quality internship or internship program. Organizations and students both gain tremendous benefits from these types of experiences.

Benefits for Students

- Internships provide a continuous pool of highly-qualified students to recruit.
- Internships serve as a low-cost training and development program.
- Internship programs strengthen relationships between employers and schools.
- Interns are effective public relations ambassadors and convey positive messages about organizations.
- Interns tend to increase regular employer productivity and motivation, and improve work climate.
- Interns free up employees from minor/routine tasks and allow them to focus on more complex projects.
- Interns are enthusiastic, provide new ideas, and provide fresh perspectives.

Benefits for Employers

- Students gain an understanding of different careers and evaluate their career path.
- Students develop professional skills that increase employability for post-graduation.
- Students with internship experience are viewed as more attractive candidates by recruiters.
- Internships are correlated to increases in academic achievement and guide student connections between coursework and career path.
- Students gain meaningful, hands-on experience and the opportunity to network with professionals in their field of study.
- Interns hired as permanent employees after graduation experience greater job satisfaction which increases retention.

Employer Best Practices

- Give interns responsibilities and ensure they understand that people are counting on them.
- Interns should feel integrated into their departments, be part of the team, and develop a sense of community.
- Allow and encourage interns to participate in professional development sessions, community engagement projects, or recruitment efforts.
- Communicate the importance of feedback by being open and approachable. Have the same feedback protocol for interns as full-time employees and ensure interns know that their feedback is valued.
- Interns should receive consistent feedback, originated in goal-setting and completed by outcome evaluation.
- Assign interns a mentor - someone they can go to who is more accessible than a director or supervisor.

Feedback From an Employer:

“Our number one goal on campus is to make sure students understand what our company is and how they can fit in. Our student interns spread the message about us and build our reputation on campus. They end up being our most effective brand ambassadors. After 4 semesters of our internship program, we no longer have to recruit students, they come to us! The fresh perspective and energy they bring to work every day has improved our office culture and increased our overall employee retention.”

Defining Internships

What Constitutes an Internship?

An internship is an official program offered by an employer to potential employees. Interns work either part-time or full-time at a company for a certain period of time. Internships are most popular with undergraduates or graduate students who work between one to four months and have a goal to gain practical work or research related experience.

Cooperative Education (Co-Op) Programs

Co-ops, or Cooperative Education, combine education with practical work for the ultimate student learning experience. Co-ops, students spend extended time away from campus exploring their chosen career fields while receiving academic credit.

How are Internships and Co-Ops Different?

Internships are typically a semester-only (usually summer-only) experience, and if they are local, there is potential for the student to continue working part-time during the school year.

Co-ops require a semester or a semester and a summer away from campus on the job. Students maintain full-time student status while on co-op and resume their studies when they return to campus. Intern and co-op students may also be able to receive academic credit through their department.

ATTRIBUTES OF INTERNSHIPS

DURATION: Internships have designated “begin” and “end” dates and are generally a one-time experience. They can last from a month to a year but most typically last one semester. Employers have the option of extending duration as well.

MENTORSHIP: Interns have dedicated mentors (outside of those who hire them for work or manage them on a daily basis) committed to the intern’s learning and growth.

ORGANIZATION: Internships have predetermined, well rounded experience plans.

FEEDBACK: Internships have regular assessment and feedback for the employer, student, and academic supervisor.

Paying Interns

It is up to the employer to decide if and how much interns will be paid. Most determine pay based on student class level and types of responsibilities.

Per the U.S. Department of Labor, the Fair Labor Standards Act requires “for-profit” employers to pay employees for their work. Interns and students, however, may not be “employees” — in which case compensation is not required. Employers should note that best practice to pay interns when at all possible.

Courts have used the “primary beneficiary test” to determine whether an intern or student is, in fact, an employee under the FLSA.

In short, this test allows courts to examine the “economic reality” of the intern employer relationship to determine which party is the “primary beneficiary” of the relationship.

When considering intern pay rates, it is recommended that employers consider carefully what the “average wage” for interns from a particular university or geographic area is, the cost of living, the opportunities for pay students give up when accepting internships instead of part-time jobs, and what kinds of candidates the employer would like to attract.

The Test for Unpaid Interns and Students

1. The extent to which the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation. Any promise of compensation, express or implied, suggests that the intern is an employee—and vice versa.
2. The extent to which the internship provides training that would be similar to that which would be given in an educational environment, including the clinical and other hands-on training provided by educational institutions.
3. The extent to which the internship is tied to the intern’s formal education program by integrated coursework or the receipt of academic credit.
4. The extent to which the internship accommodates the intern’s academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar.
5. The extent to which the internship’s duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning.
6. The extent to which the intern’s work complements, rather than displaces, the work of paid employees while providing significant educational benefits to the intern.
7. The extent to which the intern and the employer understand that the internship is conducted without entitlement to a paid job at the conclusion of the internship.

More information on the Fair Labor Standards Act as it pertains to internships may be found here:
<https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf>

Credit-Bearing and Non-Credit-Bearing Internships

Students may seek both credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing internships. Some colleges, departments, and/or faculty might require students to participate in internships. In the case of credit-bearing internships, employers are encouraged to connect with resources on campus to ensure all requirements are being met for the student. All credit-bearing internships should be reported by the student to the university. For non-credit-bearing, resources are still available for both students and employers to ensure students are getting the most from experiences. Contact UNC Career Services for more information.

International Students

F-1 and J-1 visas are the most common types of visas that international undergraduate and graduate students hold, and that employers will see when recruiting them.

An F-1 visa is granted to a person coming to the United States to attend a college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school, or other academic institution or language training program approved by the U.S. Attorney General for study by foreign students. The visa holder plans to return home after completing studies. This is the most common non-immigrant visa for an international student attending undergraduate and graduate school. Students are granted F-1 status until the completion of the academic program and 12 months of post-program practical training.

The purpose of the F-1 visa is to provide an opportunity for study in the United States. Anything outside of study, including employment, is an exception to the visa. Authorization for employment is strictly limited to certain situations:

The student holding F-1 status for a full academic year and in good academic standing may work off campus. Such work authorization is granted when the student has sustained unforeseen economic hardship. Also, the student may not work for more than 20 hours per week when school is in session, but may work full time during holidays and vacations, including breaks between terms, provided the student intends to register for the next school term.

The J-1 visa is often used by faculty and researchers but can be used by international students if there is a special sponsorship relationship with an American or foreign governmental agency, private institute, or university. This visa is normally used for students only when there is a very specific academic objective involved and when there are fairly definite plans for the student's applying his US education in his home country. Students on the J-1 may be subject to a two year "foreign residence requirement."

Curricular Practical Training (CPT): An F-1 student may perform curricular practical training prior to the completion of the educational program as part of his or her educational experience. The INS defines this type of training as "alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through agreements with the school."

Post-Completion Practical Training: This is temporary employment directly related to the student's major area of study that takes place after the student completes a full course of study. Authorization for this training may be granted for a maximum of 12 months of full-time or part-time work. Those on a student visa can only gain authorization once for this type of training.

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