"QUICK-START" INTERNSHIP GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

What is an Internship? What is a Co-op?

Internships and co-ops both consist of carefully monitored work or service experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what she or he is learning throughout the experience. They are typically part of an educational program, and are carefully monitored and evaluated if academic credit is received.

The most important element that distinguishes an internship or co-op from a short-term job or volunteer work is that an intentional "learning agenda" is structured into the experience. An effort is made to establish a reasonable balance between this learning agenda and the specific work an organization needs done. (*Adapted from materials published by the National Society for Experiential Education*)

Internships and co-ops have the same ultimate goal for students, which is to support their academic and professional success as well as professional and personal development. Though the terms are often used interchangeably, and all students are usually referred to as "interns," generally speaking they can be distinguished in the following ways:

Internships are experiences related to a student's major in which the student works in a professional environment under the supervision of practicing professionals. They:

- o   are short-term, usually one semester (three to four months) long
- o   can be full- or part-time
- o   can be paid or unpaid (see Department of Labor standards later in this document)
- o   may or may not be for academic credit.

Co-ops (cooperative education) are generally defined as work experiences related to a student's major in which the student works for a period of time and attends school for a period of time. Co-ops are typically:

- o   long-term (6 months to one year or more - length of time varies),
- o   usually paid,
- o   usually for academic credit.

How Do Internships/Co-ops Benefit Employers?

Regardless of whether you choose the internship or co-op model, your organization will benefit from the experience. Here are just some of those benefits:

- o   To develop a talent "pipeline" (cost-effective way to evaluate and recruit potential future employees)
- o   Year round source of highly motivated pre-professionals
- o   Students bring new perspectives to old problems and can provide creative and innovative input
- o   Visibility of your organization is increased on college and university campuses
- o   Quality candidates for short-term projects
- o   Freedom for professional staff to pursue higher level projects
- o   Flexible work force not requiring a long-term employer commitment

The 2019 Intern & Recent Grads Pay Rates & Practices survey conducted by ERC (Employer's Research Council) and NOCHE (Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education), found that 53% of survey respondents reported the number one benefit of having interns on staff was that it allowed them to develop a talent pipeline of new hires for full-time, entry-level positions. Additionally, more than 73% of all survey respondents reported making offers for full-time employment to candidates who had internship experience (with their organization or elsewhere). View or download key findings and the full survey at www.noche.org/317.

STEPS TO BEGINNING AN INTERNSHIP OR CO-OP PROGRAM

As varied as organizations are in age, size, industry and product, so too are their internship or co-op activities. How do you know what kind of program will work best for you?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- ✓ What does your organization hope to achieve from the program?
- ✓ Are you a small organization searching for additional help on a project?
- ✓ Is your organization growing quickly and having difficulty finding motivated new employees?
- ✓ Are you a nonprofit that isn't able to pay a lot, but can provide an interesting and rewarding experience?
- ✓ Is your organization seeking to identify future employees with management potential?

A careful discussion with management can create a consensus on program goals that can be understood by all involved. The program and internship can be designed to best meet those expectations. As many staffing professionals may know, in order for a program to be successful, it will require the commitment of management.

Carefully plan and write out your internship program and goals. Managers, supervisors/mentors, interns, and college/university career centers are all going to be reading what you write about the program. Draft a job description that clearly explains the duties and learning component of the internship. Do you want someone for a specific project? What about general support around the workplace? How about giving the intern a taste of everything your company does? Structure the internship ahead of time so that you can be sure to meet your goals and not find yourself floundering halfway through the process. Use **THIS WORKSHEET** to help with setting goals. (https://noche.org/media/1/settinginternshipgoals_worksheet.pdf)

Things to think about:

- ✓ Will you pay the intern? If so, how much? Wages vary widely from field to field, so be sure yours are competitive or offer competitive incentives. View or download the **2019 ERC/NOCHE Intern & Recent Grad Pay Rates & Practices Survey** for current Northeast Ohio intern salary data, trends and information.
- ✓ Where will you put the intern? Do you have adequate workspace for them?
- ✓ Will you help make transportation arrangements, housing arrangements, etc.?
- ✓ What sort of academic background and experience do you want in an intern?
- ✓ Decide on standards for quality — it'll help you narrow down the choice and find the best candidates.
- ✓ Who will have the primary responsibility for the intern? Will that person be the mentor or supervisor?
- ✓ What will the intern be doing? Be as specific as possible. Interns, like others in the process of learning, need structure so they don't become lost, confused or bored.
- ✓ Do you want to plan a program beyond the work you give your interns? Will there be special training programs, formal performance reviews, lunches with executives, social events?

Keep in mind that your interns are walking advertisements for your company. If they have a good experience working for you, they're likely to tell their friends — word gets around. A bad internship, by contrast, can only hurt your chances of attracting good students for next year.

FINDING INTERNS

How will you find those ideal candidates to fill your internship position(s)? The number one tip from those who have successful internship programs is to get out there early! This cannot be overemphasized to organizations that want the very best interns. Begin searching three to four months before you need a student to begin. Starting early has other advantages: the longer you accept applications, the better your chance of finding the best person for the job. The sooner you get one, the longer you have to form a good working relationship with him or her.

Remember: choose your interns just as carefully as you'd choose permanent employees. After all, they might be permanent employees someday. You're making an investment; time and money will go in this person. This is where the interview will come in handy: Is the intern truly motivated, or does he or she just want a job? Will the intern fit into your organization's culture? Does he or she have the level of experience you need? With careful consideration of who to hire at the beginning, you can avoid some of the most common pitfalls of internships.

Recruit the intern(s)

- ✓ When you're ready to recruit, develop relationships with Career Services offices at northeast Ohio schools (**https://noche.org/career-services**).
- ✓ Create an account at **https://www.noche.org/NEOtalentexchange** – NOCHE's online matching platform which gives you real-time matches to qualified candidates for internship AND jobs (**FREE** to post unlimited internship and other experiential learning opportunities; only $39 each for full and part-time jobs).

Now What?

Once you've hired a "worker," you have them work, right? That's true for interns as well as regular employees, but with an intern, you'll be making an important first impression. The beginning days of the internship program are often its defining days. When you give them their first tasks, you're signaling what can be expected in the future. If you give them nothing or very little to do, it sends a message that this job will be easy — and boring. Interns don't want that, and of course, neither do employers. A well organized and structured internship program will probably be the single most important influence on an intern's impression of your organization. So how do you "plan for success"? Consider the goals of your program. The nature of the program and the activities/tasks/projects that you choose to undertake should directly relate to established goals.

First things first: Orient your intern to his or her new workplace. This might take the form of a conventional orientation program or merely a walk around the office, depending on the size of your company. After all, even though they may not be permanent employees, they'll be spending a great deal of time in your workplace. Give interns an overview of your organization; some companies give talks or hand out information about the company's history, vision, and services. Before the intern's first determine what computer access s/he will require; establish username, password, email address if applicable, etc. Create a one-page document with important policies and procedures (e.g. cell phone usage, social media, confidentiality, sick/time-off notification, etc.) – review with the intern on day one; both parties sign and retain a copy. Explain who does what and what the intern's duties will be. Introduce him or her to co-workers and give them a complete tour of the facility. Making your intern at home in the office is your first step to bringing him or her back.

Give your intern the resources he or she needs to do the job. That may sound obvious, but you'd be surprised at how many employers stick their interns out in the hallway or transfer them from desk to desk. That sends a potent message you don't want to send: Interns aren't important; we don't want you here. Give the intern a work space, point out the supply room, introduce the tech support people, etc.

Manage Interns

Keep an eye on the intern. This doesn't mean to watch their every move, but do make sure you know what's happening with their daily tasks. Watch for signs that the intern is confused or bored. If you intimidate your interns into silence, you could miss out on valuable contributions to your projects—or warnings about impending problems. As often as silence means that an intern is busy, it also could mean that he or she is confused, and shy about telling you so. It's easy to be shy in a workplace full of older strangers who all know each other. Determine whether the intern is trying to do anything that requires someone else's input. Make sure that work is taking precedence over web browsing. Paying attention early helps you head off problems and bad habits early on.

Along those same lines, it's important to give them lots of feedback! Especially if your interns have never done this kind of work before, they'll want to know if their work is measuring up to your expectations. No matter what the level of experience, they need you, as an experienced professional, to let them know if their work is officially "okay." Regularly examine what your intern has produced and provide feedback.

Evaluate Interns

Remember those goals you outlined before? A few weeks after the internship begins, it's time to see how well you and your intern are meeting those goals. Evaluation processes differ. Yours might be as formal as written evaluations every three weeks or as informal as occasional lunches with the intern, the internship supervisor and/or the intern's mentor. It is advisable to have the intern evaluate the experience and the company as well; students earning credit for their internship will have formal evaluation procedures and forms for you to use. Again, your structure is largely up to your corporate culture and needs and/or contingent upon whether the intern is earning credit. As an added bonus, these evaluations will be handy later if you decide to interview a former intern for full-time work; to publicize how successful your program has been; and for continuous program improvement. Maintaining program popularity will require hard evidence that your organization is getting a return on its investment. Some organizations have also adopted a process of formal exit interviews. Through this process they can determine if interns are leaving the company having had a good experience, and it provides valuable feedback to managers for program planning. In addition to qualitative measures, a number of quantitative measures may also be adopted. Some common measures include: the number of interns that become full-time employees, repeat requests for interns from managers, and growing numbers of intern applicants. In order to successfully measure your own program outcome, you should incorporate formal evaluations and exit interviews into your procedures. **TIP:** To ensure candid responses, someone other than the direct supervisor should conduct the exit interview.

Keep your focus on the future. Take on interns now and you'll have a competitive advantage in recruiting the best workers. Your new workers will already be trained for your workplace and loyal to your company, which lowers training time, recruiting costs, and turnover rates. You'll build a reputation that will pay off with students, colleges, and the community. And your company will save money while benefiting from the input of talented, enthusiastic, innovative people. With all of these advantages, you might find that you can't afford ***not*** to do internships.

TOP TEN CONCERNS OF INTERNS

1. **Give us real work!** It can't be said too many times that interns want to work and learn. An internship can help you get a job done that you couldn't otherwise, right? If you've brought on an intern as a recruitment tool, then how will you be able to assess their abilities? It just makes sense to utilize your interns well.

2. **Do what you say, and say what you do!** Be honest with your interns about what they can expect during their internship. If the job will require stuffing some envelopes, then make that clear. But if you tell the intern they will be researching a project, and they spend 90% of their time doing "grunt work," then bad feelings will develop. Honesty doesn't cost you anything, and it will make the interns feel that much more respected.

3. **We like feedback!** Remember that interns are students, and they may not have the business skills and experiences that you take for granted. If your intern makes an oversight, just pull him or her aside and explain how the situation should be handled in the future.

4. **We want to be included too!** Is there a staff meeting that they can attend? Can they quietly tag along to that next project meeting? Headed to lunch with a couple of people in the office? Please include them in the daily life of your workplace. After all, if you provide a little more perspective on the intern's work, the product will be much better.

5. **Please explain.** When you assign work, make sure you give a detailed explanation. While the work may seem trivial and obvious to you, it may not be obvious to someone who's never done it before. Patience and a few extra minutes at the beginning will pay off later when your intern can produce good work independently.

6. **I want a mentor!** If possible within your organization's structure, have a mentor (ideally not the supervisor) to provide guidance. Make it someone who truly likes to teach, and the experience will be even better.

7. **A minute of your time please.** The best mentor in the world is useless if he or she can't or won't spend the necessary time mentoring. As newcomers, interns may not speak up if they're feeling ignored, so the burden of making sure they're okay is on the mentor. If the busiest person in the office wants to be the designated mentor, he or she should schedule regular times to meet with the intern.

8. **Be prepared for me!** That wonderful day has arrived and the intern arrives to start their internship only to learn that no one knew they were coming. Be sure that key staff are aware of the intern's start date and ready to welcome him or her!

9. **Um… I need a chair.** It is amazing how many employers hire an intern and don't think about the fact that they will need a desk, chair, phone, and a computer in order to perform the tasks assigned. It is not efficient to move an intern from desk to desk as people are out from one day to the next. If you want to get a job done, you need to supply the intern with the tools and workspace to do the job.

10. **Show me the money (as best you can).** While each internship/co-op is different, and each industry has its own personality, remember that interns have expenses. Your organization may not be in a position to pay much, but maybe you can supplement by helping to pay for their parking, take them to lunch every so often, pay for special industry training, or develop some other creative way to assist them.

Pay is not everything, but it is important to students!

According to the SallieMae* "How America Pays for College 2018" report, only about 28% of students receive scholarships/grants that they don't have to repay. Most students rely on help from parents, loans (federal and private), income from a job (full-time, part-time, or work-study), or their own savings to pay for school. Thus, a minority of students may take an unpaid internship for the experience [and because it may lead to a possible job offer], but most students need a paid internship. *_https://www.salliemae.com/about/leading-research/how-america-pays-for-college/paying-for-college-combo/_

LEGAL ISSUES *(NOT legal advice!)*

Do you have to pay interns? Take the "Primary Beneficiary Test" for your answer.

The U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) severely restricts a for-profit employer's ability to use **unpaid interns**. It does not limit an employer's ability to hire *paid* interns. The U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheet #71* has outlined seven criteria to "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.

Keep In Mind

Even if a student is working through a school program for which he or she is being "paid" in college credits, the student still has the right, under the FLSA, to be paid unless all seven of the criteria are met. Paid interns make ideal workers — hungry to learn, eager to make a good impression and willing to perform a multitude of tasks. The relatively small amount of money employers spend on intern wages is a good investment, because it often produces highly prepared future, long-term employees. Paying your interns also gives you a competitive advantage for top-performing and highly motivated students that the "big name" companies are recruiting for through paid internships. Remember also that **students have to pay for their credits**!

* https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm This FACT SHEET was last updated in January 2018.

ORIENTING AND TRAINING INTERNS

Many students are unfamiliar with the activities, environment and objectives of business and industry. Even though your interns may have worked part-time to support their education, these experiences may not have exposed them to organizational politics, the need for confidentiality, the importance of teamwork, or the profit-making orientation of business. It is this orientation and training dimension of the internship experience that emphasizes the partnership role of the sponsoring organization.

The employer should identify the specific terms and conditions of employment (e.g., dates of employment as an intern, including the date the internship will end; compensation; organizational and/or reporting relationships; principal duties, tasks or responsibilities; working conditions; confidentiality/nondisclosure agreements; any other expectations of the employer), and should discuss these with the prospective intern so that there is no misunderstanding regarding the relationship. Also, it makes good sense to document such a discussion with a written agreement signed by the company and the intern.

The sooner your student interns understand what your organization does and how it operates, the sooner they can assume assigned responsibilities and become productive. You can help this process by providing them with the following things:

Prior to the first day:

- o Set up an organized work area for the intern
- o Set up computer, phone, voicemail, email, and internet access and/or other resources necessary for them to accomplish the tasks you have stipulated in the internship position description
- o Outline work expectations for the duration of the internship
- o Prepare forms to be signed, including policies/procedures and/or a confidentiality agreement, if necessary

Provide interns with information regarding:

- o company/organization/industry overview and mission
- o special industry jargon
- o specific work standards and procedures
- o reporting relationships
- o access to the supervisor (days, times, and duration)
- o tasks that can be completed without supervisory approval
- o mail and telephone systems
- o approved methods of correspondence (i.e. is it okay to text the supervisor if they are running late?)
- o safety regulations
- o procedure for signing off completed work
- o periodic documents or reports to be completed
- o security and confidentiality issues, if relevant
- o acceptable dress and appearance
- o maintaining the premises and work station
- o productive interactions with others at the work site
- o personnel who can answer different kinds of questions
- o how the organization wants the intern to deal with clients, customers, and vendors

You can communicate this information in several ways:

- o take your interns on a tour of the facilities and introduce them to the other employees
- o give your interns company materials to read such as newsletters, annual reports, an organization chart, or memos from the CEO
- o encourage your interns to spend break and lunchtimes in places where employees gather
- o schedule regular one-on-one meetings with them
- o give the interns opportunities to observe (and/or participate in) professional meetings, events, activities
- o allow the interns to interview company personnel
- o encourage the interns to walk around and observe others at work

Develop a thorough orientation and training program to be implemented when the interns begin working so they'll quickly become productive members of your team.

DEVELOPING WORK ACTIVITIES AND MEASURABLE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A large part of producing effective position descriptions involves the development of challenging work assignments that complement students' academic programs. One way to do this is to design a preliminary list of work activities that will fit the needs of your department.

Later, when the interns you select join your team, you will have a chance to review the work activities and modify them according to the interns' knowledge and personal work/learning goals.

As part of the educational process, internship/co-op activities should focus on projects specifically related to the academic majors and the degrees the interns expect to receive. Students who perform mostly menial tasks will become quickly demoralized and will learn nothing about applying their expertise to a business environment. While many students work (or have worked) at part-time jobs to finance their education, an internship does **not** fall into this category. It is actually a learning experience and should offer every opportunity to link classroom learning to practical workplace experience.

Undergraduate students expect and appreciate clear direction regarding what is expected of them and frequent feedback concerning what and how they have done. (In their academic environment, clear direction and periodic feedback is the way of life.) It is also most important that the interns perceive their work is making a useful contribution to the sponsoring organization. A particular concern at the undergraduate level is that the work assignments provide the interns with a variety of tasks, while accommodating the needs of the organization. Of course, some of the interns' responsibilities will involve repetition, because all work involves some rote activity. However, the program should be designed to maximize the scope of the students' organizational experience.

Sample tasks that undergraduate students have provided for their sponsoring organizations include the following:

All of these tasks should relate to the overall efforts of your organization.

- ✓ performing laboratory tests
- ✓ writing handbooks or manuals
- ✓ designing posters, charts, graphs
- ✓ generating financial forecast and cost recovery reports
- ✓ performing software/hardware modifications
- ✓ developing marketing collateral
- ✓ conducting studies and surveys
- ✓ developing slide/sound presentations
- ✓ compiling technical reports
- ✓ conducting research
- ✓ generating social media and marketing plans

(***See Employer Resource Guide* for more task and back-up task ideas, and printable templates***)

SUPERVISING THE INTERN

As an intern supervisor, you use all the skills necessary in any effective supervisory relationship:

- ✓ Providing leadership
- ✓ Motivating
- ✓ Delegating
- ✓ Communicating
- ✓ Developing and training
- ✓ Evaluating

Additionally, the students will look to you for support and assistance in their transition from the classroom to the work environment. Since the internship/co-op is an extension of the learning process, you will need to provide opportunities to bridge the two experiences. At the same time you will have an opportunity to coach, counsel and reinforce positive attitudes and performance.

The intern or interns should report to **ONE** supervisor through whom all work is funneled. Supervisors should meet with interns regularly to provide feedback concerning their performance. During these meetings, the students can:

- o report on the status of a project
- o ask questions
- o learn how their work is contributing to the organization
- o participate in an evaluation of their strengths
- o discuss areas needing growth and development
- o get a sense of what kind of work lies ahead

* https://noche.org/media/1/resourceguide-complete-final.pdf

Encourage your interns to keep a portfolio of work accomplished during the experience. This will help fulfill any academic requirements and provide students with a sense of accomplishment. In addition, it will give you a basis to discuss their professional growth. Specific work documents to include in a portfolio might be any of the following:

- ✓ Job Descriptions
- ✓ Company Newsletters
- ✓ Financial Reports
- ✓ Legislation
- ✓ Performance Appraisals
- ✓ Displays & Exhibits
- ✓ Proposals (intern's own project proposals)
- ✓ Charts/Graphs
- ✓ References
- ✓ Manuals
- ✓ Correspondence
- ✓ Survey Reports

Take the Supervisor Self-Test HERE*.

*http://noche.org/media/1/supervisorselftest.pdf

KEY POINTS FOR INTERN SUPERVISORS

- o Remember that you are a role model.
- o Maintain an open channel of communication with formal and informal meetings
- o Keep the interns busy and directed towards their learning objectives. Students rarely complain of overwork, but they do complain if they are not challenged.
- o Provide opportunities for increasing responsibility.
- o Encourage professionalism by assisting the interns in developing human relations skills, decision-making abilities, and managing office politics.
- o Help interns develop connections (include them in meetings, invite them to networking events, help them create a LinkedIn account and train them to connect with everyone they meet, include them in staff and other meetings, client visits, special events, etc.)

SUPERVISOR EVALUATION OF STUDENT

Evaluation is an assessment of the student's performance, professionalism, and development of knowledge and skills during his or her internship/co-op. It should be administered mid-way and at the end of the internship/co-op, and will be one of many determining factors in the student's final internship/co-op grade if the internship is for credit. See the **Employer Resource Guide*** for evaluation templates. (*https://noche.org/media/1/resourceguide-complete-final.pdf)

Internship Best Practices Checklist

Clearly Define Goals

- o Define student goals (learning objectives), organization goals and department goals
- o Goals should be realistic and measurable

Build organizational support

- o Use your goals to gain support from organization leaders and from front-line managers
- o How will an internship program help meet organizational objectives and affect the bottom line?

Have Enough Work for Interns

- o Provide meaningful projects
- o Offer projects an intern can "own"
- o Determine backup tasks - things that add value but can be done with little or no supervision
- o Have interns keep a daily or weekly journal of their experience

Pay Interns

- o Pay interns hourly wage through your payroll system
- o Work with college for credit where applicable
- o Consider scholarships, housing, benefits and other ways to compensate

Work with Interns

- o Assign one single supervisor who meets frequently with intern
- o Appoint an intern mentor if feasible for your organization
- o Ensure every project has:
    - ✓ A due date
    - ✓ Detailed description and required format
    - ✓ Ongoing feedback for the duration of the project
    - ✓ Instructions on how to get help on project if needed
- o Provide interns with an orientation, including a written list of expectations and a handbook
- o Define a workspace, equipment, and policies around personal use of technology
- o Be inclusive of interns – meetings, client or other off-site visits, after work activities, fun
- o Continuous training throughout the internship experience

End the Internship Well

- o Evaluate interns formally and informally
    - ✓ At least twice during experience
    - ✓ Interns want frequent feedback
- o Near the conclusion of the internship provide the opportunity for interns to make a presentation on their experience (to executives, management, department, etc.)
- o Conduct a formal exit interview (should be conducted by someone other than supervisor)

Stay Connected After the Internship

- o Connect via LinkedIn
- o Send interns care packages (especially during finals), encouraging notes or company swag throughout year to remain top of mind

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **https://www.noche.org/media/1/InternshipManagementTips.pdf**
- **https://www.noche.org/media/1/InternshipManagementTips2.pdf**
- **https://noche.org/media/1/19-Intern-Recent-Grad-Pay-Rates-Practices-Survey.pdf** *(ERC/NOCHE annual survey of Northeast Ohio employers)*
- **https://www.noche.org/media/1/SMART_GoalsWorksheet.pdf**
- **https://www.noche.org/media/1/More-Tips-and-Advice-from-Experts.pdf**
- **https://www.noche.org/media/1/GenerationalDivide.pdf**
- **https://www.noche.org/media/1/HR-and-CompensationTipsHandout.pdf**

Need more help?

Attend a **Maximize Your Intern & Entry Talent ROI** workshop www.noche.org/workshops

Take this online course www.nochecourses.org

- o **Option #1 – Full Course $95**
- o **Option #2 – Entrepreneur/Start-Up Course – No Cost**

Contact NOCHE's Associate Vice President for Programs, Brenda Davis Smith at **bdavissmith@noche.org or** 216.302.3242 for information about custom consulting services and total internship management workshops.