INTERNSHIPS
Get Your Program Started

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Just the Facts … About Starting an Internship Program

What is an Internship?

Internships are developed to assist employers in meeting their particular organization's goals while also providing a mentored, career related experience for the intern.

Internships can occur during the fall, spring, and/or summer semesters. They can range from a couple of months to over six months in duration, although the average internship lasts about a semester. While some internships are full-time, others range from 10 to 30 hours per week. An internship experience can be paid, unpaid, for credit, not for credit, or any combination of these. Details about the number of hours worked, length of internship, rate of pay, and other specifics are usually negotiated between employers and potential interns with the guidance of a faculty adviser.

Key Benefits:

- Temporarily increase staff size.
- Accomplish short-term projects at minimal costs.
- Experience intern's current knowledge base from their academic coursework.
- Gain new perspectives on the work environment from interns.
- Obtain increased company awareness and enhanced reputation on campus through word of mouth.
- Test-drive potential full-time hires and increase their retention.
- Build relationships with local universities, career centers and faculty.

Developing an Internship

Developing an internship position will require some research and planning on your part to provide a well-rounded, positive learning experience, and a mentoring environment for the intern. There are many ways you can incorporate an intern into your organization. Many internships are formed around identifying the following criteria:

- **Special projects**
  Interns can be utilized to accomplish special projects such as creating promotional materials, conducting research, designing web pages and organizing special programs. The goals, deadlines, and outcomes for a project-focused internship should be identified so that everyone clearly understands their roles and responsibilities.
- **Personnel resources**
  Some organizations routinely experience peak periods where additional staff are needed, or there is a continuous demand for staff due to limited budgets. Interns can help to alleviate some of these staffing concerns. For example, interns can be assigned to serve as public relations assistants, marketing associates or computer support staff. Since professional development should be the priority in any internship, it is inappropriate to assign an intern to a position that is strictly clerical in scope. Obviously, there are clerical duties associated with any position; however these should not be the focus of the internship.
- **Time commitments**
  Once the internship duties have been identified, you should then determine the time commitments required to fulfill the duties of the internship. This includes identifying the number of months and hours per week the intern will work.
- **Level of staff support**
  Although you and your supervisor may see the need for an intern in your organization, you must also identify and gain the support of other staff members who may be working with and mentoring the intern during his or her stay.

Mentoring Your Intern

Outcomes of effective mentoring:

- Contributes to employee motivation, performance, and ongoing training.
- Enables new interns to acclimate more quickly to an organizational culture and become productive.
- Provides encouragement for the intern to advance in their profession.
- Inspires mentors to develop leadership skills and advance in their own careers.

Qualities of effective mentors and interns:

Mentor: Utilizes strong listening skills, offers frequent and honest feedback, works to understand the intern's strengths and weaknesses, and focuses on the intern's professional as well as personal growth.

Intern: Displays commitment to professional as well as personal growth, possesses a willingness to learn, displays trustworthiness and objectivity, listens effectively and asks questions, and connects classroom knowledge with experiences.

Methods to Enhance the Internship Experience

- Introduce interns to co-workers and other important contacts within the organization. An official welcome will help interns feel part of the team.
- Utilize the "Buddy System." New interns can benefit from peer mentors who show them the ropes. This interaction can supplement formal training and orientation programs and accelerate a new intern's productivity and sense of belonging.
- Communicate job expectations in a clear and concise manner. Encourage interns to ask questions to clarify job responsibilities.
- Facilitate the achievement of performance expectations through feedback and performance appraisal. A faculty adviser may request performance reviews if the student intern is receiving academic credit for the internship experience.
- Assign the intern challenging tasks. Choose projects that offer appropriate growth opportunities matched to the intern's abilities and interests.
- Provide shadowing time for interns to observe how managers manage time, people, communication, resources and budgets. Encourage two-way feedback.
- Include interns in staff meetings and related professional activities when possible.
- Familiarize student interns with company rules and policies.

Recruiting for an Internship

Once you have identified the scope of the internship and the resources necessary to support an intern, you will need to create a job description that explains the duties, skills, qualifications, pay (if applicable), and time commitments of the internship. The completed job description will be used to begin the recruiting process. Career Services can assist you with your hiring efforts through our various recruiting services.

Evaluating an Intern

Creating performance feedback tools are just as important as the development, implementation and recruitment of interns. The evaluation process can consist of both quantitative and qualitative measurements and can take the form of pre- and post-internship surveys and exit interviews. Career Services has a sample *Student Intern Performance Evaluation* available for download on our Web site for your convenience.

Contact our recruiting staff at cscjobs@kent.edu or 330-672-2360 to get started!