based on Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program by Michael True.
What is an internship?

An internship is any carefully monitored work or service experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and actively reflects on learning throughout the internship experience.

- Duration of anywhere from a month to two years.
- May be part-time or full-time.
- May be paid or non-paid.
- Internships may be part of an educational program and carefully monitored and evaluated for academic credit, or internships can be part of a learning plan that someone develops individually.
- An important element that distinguishes an internship from a short-term job or volunteer work is that an intentional “learning agenda” is structured into the experience.
- Learning activities common to most internships include learning objectives, observation, reflection, evaluation and assessment.
- An effort is made to establish a reasonable balance between the intern’s learning goals and the specific work an organization needs completed.

How do internships benefit employers?

- Year round source of highly motivated pre-professionals.
- Students bring new perspectives to old problems.
- Visibility of your organization is increased on campus.
- Quality candidates for temporary or seasonal positions/projects.
- Freedom for professional staff to pursue other projects.
- Flexible, cost-effective work force not requiring a long-term employer commitment.
- Proven, cost-effective way to recruit and evaluate potential employees.
- Enhanced image as you contribute your expertise to the educational enterprise.
How to begin an internship...

Set goals. Management must be committed for the program to be successful.

- What does your organization hope to achieve from the program?
- Is your organization growing quickly and having difficulty finding motivated new employees?
- Are you a nonprofit that doesn’t have a lot of money to pay, but can provide an interesting and rewarding experience?
- Is your organization searching out new employees with management potential?

Write a plan.

- Draft a job description that clearly explains the job’s duties.
- Structure the internship ahead of time so that you can be sure to meet your goals.
- Who will supervise or mentor the intern?
- 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?
- What will you pay the intern? If so, how much?
- Where will you put the intern? Do you have adequate workspace for them? Will you help make parking arrangements, living arrangements, etc.?
- What sort of academic background and experience do you want in an intern?
- Who will have the primary responsibility for the intern? Will that person be a mentor or merely a supervisor?
- What are the job tasks and priorities?
- Will there be special training, lunches, and/or performance reviews?

Recruit the intern.

- Begin recruitment early (3 to 4 months before you need the intern) to insure you get plenty of good, qualified applicants.
• Develop relationships with local recruitment resources such as career centers at colleges, internships/job fairs, advertising in local papers and websites, as well as student organizations.
• Be certain the intern is a good fit for the culture of your organization.
• Learn the legal implications of hiring an intern. Consult your corporate lawyer or the intern’s school office of international education, if applicable.

Manage the intern.

• Orient your intern to his/her new workspace via an office tour or conventional orientation program.
• Departmental literature may be helpful to interns in clearly defining the role of the organization.
• Introduce them to his/her co-workers in the office.
• Give the intern the resources he/she needs to do the job.
• Give the intern a place of their own, integrated into the office. Introduce the intern to the tech support people and be certain to include the intern in meetings.
• Clearly explain the work the intern will be committed to completing with whatever relevant expectations.
• Keep an eye on the intern to insure they are busy and challenged in their role. Examine the intern’s work and offer suggestions, if warranted.

Evaluate the intern.

• Use the goals established before the intern was hired as a gauge to how successful the intern is in fulfilling his/her duties.
• The evaluation serves as documentation if the intern is later interviewing for full-time work or in publicizing how successful your program is. Common measures of program success include the number of interns who become full-time employees, repeat requests from managers, and a growing number of intern applicants.
• The evaluation also serves as an opportunity for the intern to properly reflect on the internships, the skills acquired, and how those skills transfer to other disciplines.
Top Intern Concerns

1. Give the intern real work.
2. Clarify the intern’s duties to him/her.
3. Offer the intern feedback.
4. Create an environment of inclusion with the intern.
5. Explain to the intern what they can expect from their internship
6. Make certain the intern’s mentor provides guidance for the intern.
7. Be prepared for the internship
8. Provide the intern with whatever financial restitution possible

Orientation & Training

Investing supervisory time to establish an important bond with interns sets a crucial tone for the internship experience. To help acclimate interns, please take time initially to:

**Explain the Mission of the Organization**
- How did the organization start? Why?
- What is unique about your product or service?
- Who benefits from your product or service?
- What are the organization’s current objectives?
- How may the intern contribute to those objectives?

**Explain the Organization Structure**
- Who reports to whom?
- Who, specifically, is the intern’s supervisor?
- What is the intern’s department responsible for?
- How are decisions made?
- Which personnel can answer different kinds of questions?

**Outline Organizational Rules, Policies, Decorum and Expectations**
- Is there special industry jargon?
- What are the specific work standards and procedures?
- What access to the supervisor (days, times, and duration) does the intern have?
- How should they process requests?
- How do the mail and telephone systems work?
Define the Intern's Responsibilities

- What is the intern’s role?
- What projects will be assigned to him or her?
- What resources are available to the intern?
- What training is necessary?
- How does the organization want the intern to deal with clients and vendors?
- What tasks can be completed without supervisory approval?
- Do other employees understand the intern’s role?

Monitor the Intern's Adjustment and Understanding of What is Expected

- Make yourself visibly available to the intern
- Assign someone who can periodically “check-in” with the intern
- Guide the intern by providing feedback and constructive criticism
- Force the intern to ask questions

Remember, the success of an internship depends on the partnership between representatives of the organization, the college, and the student.

Orientation & Training

A large part of producing effective position descriptions challenging work assignments that complement students’ academic programs. This can be accomplished by:

- Creating a detailed description of typical tasks to promote your internship or field experience at a college, which will help in screening the right candidates for the position.
- Review work activities, modifying them according to the interns' knowledge and personal work/learning goals once you select interns for your team.

Work assignments at the undergraduate level should provide the interns with a variety of tasks, while accommodating the needs of the organization. As you are developing these work assignments, keep in mind:

- Internship work activities should focus on projects specifically related to the academic major and the intern's expected degree.

- An internship does not fall into the category of a job, but is part of their academic program which should effort to link classroom learning to workplace experience.

- It is important that interns perceive their work is making a useful contribution to the sponsoring organization.

- Undergraduate students expect clear direction regarding expectations and frequent feedback concerning their work. In their academic environment, clear direction and periodic feedback is the way of life.

- Some of the interns' responsibilities will involve repetition, because all work involves some repeated 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:

- Collecting Data: performing laboratory tests, conducting research, conducting studies and surveys

- Analyzing, Organizing, and Presenting Data: designing posters, charts, graphs, generating financial forecast and cost recovery reports, developing slide/sound presentations, compiling technical reports, preparing budgets and financial reports

- Generating Original Content: writing handbooks or manuals, creating academic lesson plans, generating marketing plans
• Other Tasks: performing software/hardware modifications, conducting training packages

KEY POINTS

• Describe challenging, but realistic tasks students can accomplish within a three-month period while incorporating the students’ particular strengths.

• Work with faculty to establish specific learning objectives for students, as well as identifying outcomes or expected products.

• Show how this work relates to the overall efforts of the department or organization.