

# SIX STEPS TO AN EFFECTIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

An internship program is a great way to reap the benefits from a pipeline of pre-professionals ready to learn and become a key component in your succession plan. It is recommended that you allow several months or as much as a year to think through and develop an effective internship program.

## 6 STEP PROCESS

1. **Set Goals and Policies for the Internship Program.** Think big picture, organizational level.

Questions to ask:

- a. What does your organization hope to gain from an internship program?
  - b. Is your organization looking to fulfill a need on a specific project or entail a variety of small projects?
  - c. What are the tools and workspace necessary for the student to be successful in the internship?
  - d. What talents and academic background do you want in an intern? Identify qualifications early on so you select the best candidate
  - e. Who will be primarily responsible for the intern(s)? Will that person be a mentor, supervisor, or both?
2. **Determine/Set Compensation.** This is a vital decision for several reasons. Paid internships attract top talent and make your company an employer of choice. Paying your interns show them that you are willing to invest in them, and you value the worth they bring to the company. Unpaid internships, although often excellent in terms of experimental learning, elevate the employer's responsibilities to adhere to Department of Labor and National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) guidelines.

Questions to Ask:

- a. Paid or unpaid; for paid internships the current range is \$10-\$20/hr depending on class level.
- b. Can we offer one-time stipends to offset the costs of:
  - Course (several of our degree majors require an internship for graduation)
  - Travel and/or relocation
  - Housing
  - Etc.

Many students are excited about the ability to relocate for an internship, but need financial assistance with the costs associated with relocation. Helping offset the cost of an internship is a great way to encourage the best and brightest to your organization.

3. **Write a Plan for the Internship.** Because an internship is an extension of the academic classroom and an opportunity for you to develop a career employee, provide meaningful projects for the student intern.

Questions to ask:

- a. Timelines (summer 10 weeks, yearlong 15-20 hours a week, etc.)
  - b. Expected Outcomes/Deliverables (student and employer)
  - c. Workspace
  - d. Hours
  - e. Project Assignments
  - f. Supervisor/Mentor
  - g. Etc.
4. **Recruit a qualified intern from Northwood University.** Use these tools/pathways to connect with the Northwood student:
    - a. Northwood University Career Network, [www.northwood.edu/nucn](http://www.northwood.edu/nucn). This is our exclusive jobs database for employers, students and alumni. Post your internships on this site, and then contact Deborah Schummer for help in communicating the opening on campus.
    - b. Internship Coordinator at Northwood University, Deborah Schummer, 989-837-4430, [schummer@northwood.edu](mailto:schummer@northwood.edu)
  5. **Manage the Intern.** It is critical that you provide an orientation for the new intern, have a proper workspace setup, provide supervision and guidance, monitor progress, write evaluations, complete an exit interview, and so on. Think of the intern as a new, part-time employee who needs to be guided and managed in order to be successful.
  6. **Exit interviews and follow-up.** Gathering feedback on the student's experience is how you improve your internship program and assess the student's interest in coming back. If your goal is to have the intern return, an exit interview, whether held face-to-face or over the telephone, is an excellent way gauge the student's interest.

## Resources for Employers

NACE, National Association of Colleges and Employers, is an excellent resource for helping employers design and develop an effective internship program. Here is their main website: [www.naceweb.org](http://www.naceweb.org)

In addition, here are links to a few of their resources:

“15 Best Practices for Internship Programs” <http://www.naceweb.org/internships/15-best-practices.aspx>

“Tips for Developing an Internship Program Schedule”  
<http://www.naceweb.org/s12102014/develop-internship-program-schedule.aspx>

“Tips for Maintaining Ties with Interns”  
<http://www.naceweb.org/s07232014/maintaining-relationship-with-interns.aspx>

Employer Guide to Structuring a Successful Internship Program.

<http://web.uri.edu/experience/files/RI-Employer-Guide-Good-Internships-are-Good-Business.pdf>

## References

- Bridge. Employer Guide to Structuring a Successful Internship Program. Retrieved from <http://web.uri.edu/experience/files/RI-Employer-Guide-Good-Internships-are-Good-Business.pdf>
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- Employer Internship Toolkit. (nd). Saginaw Valley State University. Retrieved from <https://www.svsu.edu/careerservices/foremployers/>
- For Employers. Oakland University Career Services. (nd). Retrieved from <http://www.oakland.edu/careerservices/employers/>
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- Internships. National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). Retrieved from <http://www.naceweb.org/internships/index.aspx>