Career Center

Developing an Impactful Internship Program
Employer Resource Guide

What is an internship?

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, an internship is defined as being "a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths, while simultaneously giving employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent."

Internships can look very different based upon the employer's needs, however some universal traits include:

- Clearly identified beginning and end dates
- Clearly defined goals and learning outcomes
- Regular supervision, feedback, and mentorship
- Application of knowledge gained in the classroom
- Generation of skills or knowledge that are transferable to other employment settings
- Inclusion of any resources, equipment or facilities that are needed to support the position
- Mutually beneficial to both student and employer
- Does not consist of work that a regular employee would routinely perform

Paid vs. unpaid experiences

The decision to pay your interns is one that should be considered carefully with thorough research. Depending upon the nature of the internship along with your organization's size, status, and industry, you may be legally obligated to offer compensation to your interns.

The Fair Labor Standards Act outlines the legal requirements including a six-part test that can help you determine whether an unpaid internship is possible for your organization. Rules for unpaid internships are constantly evolving so it is recommended that you visit the Department of Labor's website ensure that your internships are in compliance.

There are other benefits for offering paid internships as well. Studies have shown that paid internships tend to attract high-achieving candidates, increase the diversity of applicants, allow interns to be more focused on their projects, and establish a strong hiring pipeline for the organization. For more information about the paid vs. unpaid internships, please see the resource links.

Criteria to consider when developing your internship program

- What does your organization hope to gain from an internship program?
- Will the internship focus on one large project or will it consist of a variety of smaller projects?
- How does the internship fit into the organization's goals and mission?
- Which academic background, skills, traits and experiences are you seeking in an intern?
- Who will be responsible for mentoring and supervising the intern?
- Does the organization's leadership and staff understand the value of an internship program?

Resources

- NACE Guidelines for Internship
  https://www.naceweb.org/about-us/advocacy/position-statements/position-statement-us-internships/
- Department of Labor's Fair Labor Standards Act
  https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/71-flsa-internships
- Internship Best Practices
  http://www.naceweb.org/internships/15-best-practices.aspx
- Benefits of Paid Internships
  https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/228213
- Duke University Internship Credit Policy
  https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/about-us/policies/duke-internship-credit-policy
- Duke Career Center Employer Services
  https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/employers
- Duke Career Center CareerConnections (job portal)
  https://employer.gradleaders.com/DukeU/Employers/Lo gin.aspx?jprid=5843
- Duke Career Center Recruiting Guidelines
  https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/about-us/policies
- Duke Internship Funding Program for Students
  https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/programs/interns hip-funding-program
- Duke Career Development Process for Students
  https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/career-development-process

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