Developing a Successful STEM Internship Program

AN EMPLOYER’S GUIDEBOOK

STEM Center
800 S. College Drive • Santa Maria, CA 93454-6399
805.922.6966 ext. 3549 • www.hancockcollege.edu/stem
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why Offer an Internship Program?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is an Internship?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Do I Benefit from an Internship Program?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Businesses Benefit from Offering an Internship Program</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Central Coast Communities Benefit from Internship Programs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing Your Internship Program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Your Organization and Its Needs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving Your Internships Purpose</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Type of Work Does an Intern Expect?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing the Right Length and Type of Internships</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating an Internship Job Description</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Compensation and/or Benefits</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Pay an Intern?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying an Intern</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting and Hiring Your Intern</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting Students from Allan Hancock College</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring an Intern</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interview Process</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Want You – Selecting an Intern</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the Most of the Internship Program</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Supervision</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities Beyond Work Tasks</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working With College Students</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating Your Intern</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Evaluation Throughout the Internship</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term and Final Evaluation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating Your Internship Program</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if an Internship is Not Working Out</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Resources and Contributing Materials</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Appendix

- A. Allan Hancock College Internship Position Description
- B. Employer Evaluation of Student Intern
- C. Sample Offer Letter
- D. Sample Rejection Letter
- E. Sample Orientation Checklist
- F. Sample Internship Exit Interview
Why Offer an Internship Program?

The rise in global competition for a talented and innovative workforce means Central Coast businesses must continually strive to maintain a competitive edge. Innovations in technology, communications, and resource distribution allow local companies to operate and succeed in the international arena. Flexibility and creativity are essential attributes to thriving and expanding local businesses. This applies to product development and offered services, as well as the human resource that makes it all happen. Developing a post-secondary internship program is a responsive strategy for investing in your business’s future success.

Internship programs can provide options to some of businesses’ most challenging issues regarding rising labor costs, gaining fresh perspectives, and even discovering future business leaders. Businesses participating in an internship program will be part of a growing trend in working with temporary, flexible, semi-professional skilled labor while concurrently increasing the persistence rate of students seeking undergraduate degrees. First-hand experience or on-the-job training has proven effective in retaining students seeking degrees. Students are more likely to persevere and graduate in their chosen field, having enjoyed and participated in work-experience and mentor relationships. Businesses will gain first-hand experiences with students making the connection between what they are learning in class and the work they could perform in industry.

This guide outlines basic principles in designing and developing an internship program at your firm, and demonstrates that the benefits of an internship program to both your company and the local educational community far exceed the investment.

How to get the most out of Your Internship Program:

- Recruit the right candidates by preparing a clear and engaging internship position description.
- Create a handbook for new interns to help orient them to your company, to identify program expectations, and to serve as a guide throughout the internship.
- Designate an in-house professional mentor for each intern.
- Structure the internship with a balance of long- and short-term projects and non-time-sensitive or day-to-day work.
- Consider offering flex-time to give interns the freedom to plan their schedules on a weekly basis, especially during the academic year.
- Host social activities and local events to get to know your interns and to provide opportunities for your interns to get to know the team.
- Design and/or offer to send interns to seminars, events and other professional and personal development activities, including community volunteering for interns.
- Target your company’s project-by-project needs, and align with one or more intern positions.
- Perform self-evaluation at the conclusion of an intern’s tenure. Modify or enhance the program if appropriate.
- Consider full-time employment opportunities post-graduation.
What is an Internship?

An internship is any carefully monitored work or service experience in which a student has an intentional learning goal to gain non-traditional or additional knowledge beyond the class from the work exposure. Although internships vary widely from organization to organization, they have common characteristics.

An internship:

- Is a time-limited experience that can range from one month to one year, but usually lasts about three months.
- Includes an intentional “learning plan” that is structured into the experience.
- Promotes academic, career and/or personal development.
- Typically includes learning objectives, observations, reflection, evaluation and assessment.
- Balances the intern’s learning goals with the specific work the organization needs completed.
- May be part-time or full-time.
- Could be part of an educational program and may be carefully monitored and evaluated for academic credit.
- Has an existing employee working in the department/position to mentor and supervise the intern.

How Do I Benefit from an Internship Program?

In addition to providing direct benefit to the student through exposure to hands-on work experience, the Internship Program benefits local businesses and the community at large.

How Businesses Benefit from Offering an Internship Program

Businesses offering internship programs gain a variety of benefits. One of the more significant advantages is the opportunity to gain relational work experience with a potential full-time employee or future company leader without an immediate long-term commitment. You have the opportunity to select and develop your future talent. About four out of every five businesses using internships as a recruiting strategy report a ‘good’ to ‘excellent’ return on investment. Internships also provide an opportunity to evaluate and screen students prior to making a full-time position offer, which can save your business time and money.

It is common that student interns bring into the work force and therefore into your business a greater skill set regarding communications and technology. It is common for the summer intern to rapidly become the in-house teacher providing hands on instruction in the latest technological innovations. The persistent barrage of intern questions often becomes an excellent motivator for a business to move out of the “that’s the way we have always done it” mode. Internship program statistics indicate that businesses have reported converting more than half of eligible interns into full-time hires. If hired in a permanent position, previous interns assimilate faster in their new roles and have shorter learning curves than external hires.

Internship programs give businesses the opportunity to:

- Assist with addressing business needs
• A year round source of highly motivated pre-professionals
• College students are qualified candidates that can fill both entry-level and special skill set needs.
• Interns can help with projects and reduce the workload (short-term/part-time hiring)
• A flexible, cost-effective work force that does not require a long-term employment commitment
  • Provide freedom for professional staff to pursue creative or more advanced projects
  • A proven, cost-effective way to recruit and evaluate potential employees
  • Increase retention rate of new employees
    • Within one year of hire, nearly 86% of those that have taken part in an internship at the hiring organization are still on the job, compared to 81% of those who did not participate in an internship program.
    • Almost 40% of employers reported a higher five-year retention rate among employees hired through their internship program.
• Get fresh ideas
  • Students energize a workplace with their enthusiasm and desire to learn.
  • College students can assist a business in application of the latest business strategies and techniques by bringing in new ideas.
• Stay connected to colleges and community
  • Helps maintain connections with colleges and increase visibility on campus
  • Promotes community involvement; excellent public relations tool
  • Interns act as advocates in recruiting other students (brand ambassadors).

How Central Coast Communities Benefit from Internship Programs

The Allan Hancock College focus on internships provides value to students and those employers and business owners that elect to participate. In addition, the program provides a great value to the central coast community at-large.

• Internship programs will help keep creativity local, and in doing so, increase the local demand for more and more skilled labor.
• The program will help advance the local labor pool from unskilled to skilled.
• The program will reinforce the concept that it is possible to have an expanding, full, professional carrier on the central coast without the need to relocate to a larger metropolitan area.
• The AHC internship program will increase the number of potential middle and upper income wage earners.
• A local skilled workforce will attract more and more firms to the central coast seeking these individuals, including green, high-tech, and state-of-the art manufacturing.

Internships are a cost-effective strategy for hiring young, motivated, and educated talent. Remember that, other than compensation to the individual student employee, the Allan Hancock College Internship Program is provided at no cost to the students and the businesses that participate.

“It is better to hang out with people better than you. Pick out associates whose behavior is better than yours and you will drift in that direction.”  

Warren Buffett
Designing Your Internship Program

Prior to hiring an intern, a business must understand how interns will fit within the company’s structure, goals and culture. A clear understanding of your company’s needs and goals will help make the internship most valuable for the student, as well as maximize the benefits for your company.

Understanding Your Organization and Its Needs

As varied as organizations are in age, size, industry, and product, so too are internship activities. Questions that will help to determine what kind of program will work best for you:

- What does your organization hope to achieve from the program?
- Is your organization looking to fulfill a need on a specific project? Will this internship(s) involve one major project, or require a variety of small projects?
- Is your organization growing quickly and having difficulty finding motivated new employees?
- How will this rapid growth affect your recruitment strategies?
- Does your organization need an intern to perform administrative and support functions including data entry, answering telephones, filing, etc.? If so, approximately what percentage of the intern’s time will be spent on these activities?
- Do you want to provide the intern broad exposure to a multitude of business units, departments, tasks, and projects? How will cross-training be structured into the intern’s schedule? How much time will be devoted to each department/area? Have employees from each department been designated to mentor the intern on their particular department functions?

Once the decision to establish an internship program has been made, here are additional questions to consider:

- Where will the intern(s) be located? Is there adequate workspace?
- What talents, academic background and experience is sought in an intern?
- Decide on standards of quality early on to help select the best candidate.
- Who will be primarily responsible for the intern(s)? Will that person be a mentor, supervisor, or both?
- What projects or activities will the intern(s) work on? Be as specific as possible. Interns desire structure and meaningful work.

A careful discussion with management can create a consensus on program goals. The program and internship can then be designed to best meet those expectations. A successful program requires a commitment from upper management and the intern’s immediate supervisor.

It is important to set goals for the internship up front, and to evaluate it once the program is completed. Did the internship meet or exceed your organizational goals? If not, how can the program be redesigned to ensure a more meaningful internship in the future?

“Our students don’t want to merely graduate, they want an education that results in a good job.”

Jim Clifton, Gallup CEO and author of The Coming Jobs War
**Giving Your Internship Purpose**

Students are seeking opportunities that stimulate their interests and provide real-world experiences. A job description will structure the experience for the intern and provide the employer a means for measuring goals and accomplishments.

A meaningful, purposeful internship program will:

- Ensure the assignment of challenging projects and tasks.
  - Design a preliminary list of potential activities that fit the needs of the department.
  - Give interns focused, purposeful roles to keep them motivated.
- Relate well to students.
  - Design projects that complement students’ academic programs.
  - Give interns a broad exposure to the organization (remember: this is a chance for students to personally develop and explore career possibilities).
  - Modify activities according to intern’s specific knowledge and personal work/learning goals, once hired.
- Provide adequate, reliable, and regular supervision and mentoring
  - Serve as an information resource.
  - Ensure interns are keeping pace and accomplishing goals.

**What Type of Work Does an Intern Expect?**

The most crucial step to a successful internship is deciding what kinds of work and projects the intern will do, and managing that process throughout the internship. Interns want to be challenged. The top issue in unsuccessful internships is not having enough work or enough quality and substantive work for the intern. The best way to structure the internship experience is to plan three types of work:

- **Project work:** This can be a special analysis or project that will require the intern to use his/her skills relating to his/her major area of study. This work should be what draws the applicants to this position to give them experience for their future career.

- **Background work:** This should be some general work that is not time-sensitive and may be less than exciting, but the work is important and requires some skill. The intern should be able to keep busy and feel productive with this work during times when the project work is “on hold” (waiting for approval or clarification).

- **Unexpected work on issues that arise during the normal ebb and flow of business:** This could also be called “helping put out fires.” Providing interns with a taste of the true nature of your business and the wide variety of issues that employees must handle is a valuable experience. Interns appreciate the challenge and variety that comes from helping with these new tasks.

This balance of primary, background, and day-to-day work will enable the intern to be productive and have a well-rounded learning experience.
Choosing the Right Length and Type of Internships

Internships should fit the needs of the organization or department and the needs of the student.

- **Project-Related Interns**: Project-related interns may be brought on to assist or even lead with specific short-term projects. For example, an intern may be hired to develop a new product launch marketing campaign. When designing a project-related internship, the timeframe, as well as objective, must be clearly defined. There should be a fixed end-date, with defined accomplishments that must be met. However, to avoid project-related internships from turning into part-time or temporary work, it is important that the business allow the intern to explore other aspects of the company and provide feedback to aid in the personal development of the student. It also is important for interns to complete their projects within the established timeframe. This will enable them to feel and experience ownership throughout their participation in the internship.

- **Fixed Duration Interns**: Students pursuing internships often consider the summer period, one semester, or a combination time period for their work experience. More than just a summer job, the summer internship can provide value-add to both the students development experience and the employers bottom line. On occasion and for any number of reasons, a student may indicate ‘summer-fall’ or ‘spring-summer’ as the desired work period. If possible, employers should indicate flexibility in scheduling the internship throughout the calendar year, considering both summer interns and entertaining the possibility of programs that could extend into the traditional school year. It is important to retain an intern long enough to create mutual value for the company and intern. For example, training and orienting interns may leave little time for them to contribute their skills and knowledge if the internship is too short.

Creating an Internship Job Description

Treat the job description as an opportunity to showcase the internship(s). For some students the internship job description may be the first time they have ever heard about your internship program and your company. Why will students want to apply for your internship over others? Does your job description illustrate how it will be a unique experience? Do you fully define the benefits or incentives your company can provide? Do you describe what makes your company different or stand above the rest in its industry? Write the job description in an interesting way that engages students; this may increase your chances of finding the ideal student.

Writing an effective internship description is essential to recruiting the right kind of intern. Students really want to know what kind of work they will be doing. Students are not experts in the “HR-speak” – so write the internship description in clear, everyday language that will help the candidate know what kind of position it is and what kind of company you are.

Tip: If you’re not sure what specific projects you might have the intern work on, provide a range of “potential” projects and responsibilities. Then state that you will match the actual duties to the intern’s interest and skills or with the specific business needs. Students will appreciate that. If you know that the intern will be working on a wide variety of projects that may change daily, state that in the internship.
description. Candidates that like variety and new challenges will be drawn to apply, and those who need routine and predictability will pass up this opportunity. Giving a clear internship description is the first step in recruiting the right type of candidates.

An effective job description should:

- Explain the organization’s goals and mission.
- Outline the intern’s responsibilities and potential tasks/projects.
- Describe the necessary qualifications.
  - Skills (computer, analytical, design, communications, etc.)
  - Education level (year, GPA, etc.)
  - Majors
- Define the duration of the internship.
  - Hours required per week
  - Flexibility with schedule or specific hours that need to be covered
  - Type: summer, semester, etc.
- Note if it’s paid or unpaid.
- Provide the job location.
- Specify how to apply.
  - Provide contact information

Refer to Appendix A for Internship Job Description form.

Providing Compensation and/ or Benefits

When considering paid vs. unpaid internships, be aware of the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act and evaluate if this act applies to your business.

The U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act restricts an employer’s ability to use unpaid interns. This act applies to businesses that have two or more employees directly engaged in interstate commerce as well as annual sales of $500,000 or more. The legal considerations are addressed through six criteria for unpaid interns for service they provide to “for-profit” private sector employers articulated in the Fair Labor Standards Act (see FLSA Fact Sheet #71). Essentially, if the six criteria are met, the Department of Labor (DOL) considers there to be no employment relationship.

The six criteria established by the DOL are:

- The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the employer’s facilities, is similar to training that would be given in a vocational school.
- The internship experience is for the benefit of the student.
- The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under the close observation of a regular employee.
- The employer provides the training and derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern. Occasionally, the operations may actually be impeded.
- The Intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship.
• The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time in the internship.

Why Pay an Intern?

Beyond potential legal obligations, there are other advantages to paying an intern:

• Paying your intern creates ownership in the program by both the business and intern. Unpaid interns may view the internship as a volunteer opportunity, potentially reducing their commitment or motivation.
• Advertising paid internships will likely increase interest in the position, boost your potential candidate pool, and improve your chances of finding your ideal candidate.
• Paid interns will hold greater respect with their fellow workers (your employees).

Paying an Intern

• Wages for most internships are usually determined before the intern is hired and are not typically negotiated.
• When establishing compensation levels for interns remember that, unlike your current, full-time employees, interns do not typically receive health or retirement benefits.
• Consider paying consistent wages to all interns within each department.
• Students in technical fields are generally paid more than nontechnical fields.
• Pay for interns often varies by location, type of industry, size of business, etc.

Recruiting and Hiring Your Intern

After concluding that an intern is right for your firm, inform the Internship Specialist of your intent to participate in the Allan Hancock College Internship Program. Identify the position or positions that will be made available and as much specific information as possible, including the individual job descriptions, durations, and anticipated levels of compensation. Refer to Appendix A for the Allan Hancock College Internship Position Description form. This form is also available for download on the STEM website. Maintain periodic contact with the STEM Internship Specialist at AHC.

The STEM Internship Specialist will forward and distribute position information to perspective students through many communication channels. As a potential employer, you are encouraged to gain company exposure and pursue student relationships directly through the guidelines and opportunities identified in Recruiting Students below.

Recruiting Students from Allan Hancock College

Recruiting quality interns is one of the greatest challenges to developing a successful internship program, especially in a rural community. Allan Hancock College can help you effectively promote your internship program, finding the uniquely qualified individual to meet the needs of your company. Allan Hancock College will provide assistance and opportunities to you by providing effective recruiting strategies in the following areas:
• Career Fairs: These provide a chance to meet many students within a short period of time.
• Invitations to Guest Lecture in Classes: Your personal insight helps students learn more about your company as you develop a positive image and working relationship with the college.
• Faculty Referrals: If you already have a professional relationship with faculty members on campus, they can help refer their top students as well as provide students with information about your business.
• Online Job Postings: The college will post internship opportunities on the STEM website.
• Postings in Print: The college will advertise internship opportunities on flyers, hand-outs and on-campus outreach events.
• Announcements will be made via social media, such as our established Facebook pages.
• Posting on social media professional sites, such as LinkedIn
• Opportunities will be provided for individuals in business to become a speaker and/or mentor for an organization/club on campus.

Hiring an Intern

In many ways, hiring an intern is similar to hiring an employee. The following information will guide you in making the right hiring decisions for your business and its needs.

General

Recruitment and an appealing internship job description have netted you numerous applicants. Now how do you choose whom to interview? Generally, the process will follow the business's guidelines for hiring employees. Consider the following recommendations as well.

When evaluating resumes and applications students should be evaluated on:

• Skills and qualifications
• Relevant coursework or class projects that relate to the internship
• Other internships and/or work experiences
• Extracurricular activities
  o Leadership positions
• Honors and achievements

Also consider:

• Writing skills (proper spelling and grammar)
• Submission of a cover letter (shows an interest in the internship)
• Specific talents indicated in the application/resume as well as observed in the interview process (such as being a self-starter, creative, positive, an achiever, adaptable, etc.)

Keep in mind that you are working with a pool of students who may not have all of the desired qualifications/skills you seek since they're still in college and may have little to no work experience. However, if you select students who have the right talents for the job, with some training, students may be able to learn these desired skills and even bring fresh, new perspectives and ideas. Choose candidates you feel have the most potential; then begin the interview process.
The Interview Process

Internship interviews will help you evaluate if a student is a good fit for your business. The interview process for internships will most likely not be as in-depth as a regular job interview. Since students may be new to the interview process, it’s recommended that you share in advance the types of questions (or even specific questions) students will be asked as well as any relevant work, a portfolio of writing, project samples, etc. to share with the interviewers.

The following are potential interview questions to help you better evaluate and understand the student:

- Why did you apply for this internship?
- Why did you choose your major?
- What is your experience with (software, programs, etc.)?
- What relevant experience of yours relates to the internship?
- What do you hope to gain from this internship?
- Provide a recent example of when you ________?
- When are you available to start the internship?
- What does your schedule look like during the week? How many hours do you feel you can work?
- When do you plan on graduating?

Create an evaluation form to rate the candidates and make additional comments. By the end of the interview process, hopefully you have found a top candidate and now you can make an offer!

We Want You! – Selecting an Intern

Now that you’ve found the right intern, let them know! Send the selected student(s) an offer letter or email.

An offer letter should include:

- Dates/duration of the internship
- Specific Pay
- Deadline for acceptance
- Contact information

Refer to Appendix C and D for Sample Offer Letter and Sample Rejection Letter.
Do not send out rejection letters to the non-selected students until you have been notified by the selected intern of their acceptance or denial. Once you have been notified of an acceptance, give notice to the non-selected students about the decision made in a letter.

“Confidence is contagious.” Vince Lombardi
Making the Most of the Internship Program

Orientation

It is very important that interns be warmly welcomed and introduced throughout your organization, just as you would welcome a new full-time employee. Not only are interns new to your organization, in many cases, they are new to the professional work world.

Many students are unfamiliar with the activities, environment and objectives of your organization. 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 nature of business. It is the orientation and training of the internship experience that emphasizes these issues and provides information about the organization. The sooner your intern understands your organization and how it operates, the sooner he or she can assume assigned responsibilities and contribute to your organization.

You can help this process by providing the following kinds of information about your site/organization:

- How did the organization start? Why?
- What is unique about your product(s) or service(s)?
- Who benefits from your product(s) or service(s)?
- What are the organization's current objectives?
- How may the intern contribute to those objectives?
- Is there any special, relevant jargon that should be made known?
- What are the specific work standards and procedures?
- When will the supervisor be accessible (days, times, duration) to the intern?
- How should they process requests?
- How do the mail and telephone systems work?
- What are the approved forms for correspondence?
- By what safety regulations must they abide?
- What periodic forms or reports need to be completed?
- Are there security or confidentiality issues of which the intern should be aware?

In an internship, having mutually agreeable goals among the business and student is essential. Students may choose suitable internships on the basis of an organization's pre-established goals. If the company or department does not have pre-established internship goals, the student and organization may work together to articulate clear, measurable goals. If the student’s goals don’t match those of the sponsoring organization, the internship is unlikely to be successful from either party’s perspective.

Refer to Appendix E for a Sample Orientation Checklist.

Tip: Provide an Intern Handbook. This internship may represent many interns’ first opportunity to work in a professional environment. Policies, procedures, objectives, and other information may be overwhelming. A handbook or designated (password-protected) section on your website will help guide
interns throughout their internship. This will be a resource they can access in the future for common questions.

Training and Supervision

A well-organized internship requires plenty of training and supervision. On-the-job training should include the same orientation all new employees receive. The work should be structured, and the intern should be assigned an employee supervisor/mentor with whom he or she can consult as needed.

Mentor

A mentor can prove to be an invaluable resource throughout the internship. A mentor will most surely enhance the student’s experience and help them get the most out of their internship. This mentor also will serve as an excellent reference when deciding whether or not the intern would be a good candidate to hire as an employee upon graduation.

Mentors must have the time necessary to mentor a student. They also should have an interest in facilitating personal development. Mentors generally work in the same department as the intern and work closely with them on related projects.

Mentors serve as:

- Teachers
  - Help the intern learn about the business and its offerings.
  - Explain projects and processes.
- Supporters
  - Help make the transition to the workplace as easy as possible.
  - Answer questions or concerns.
  - Serve as a positive role model.
- Evaluators
  - Provide constructive feedback to the intern on a regular basis.

Due to the nature of an internship, it is imperative that interns are provided with sufficient supervision. Considerable time investment will be needed, especially on the front end, to plan for and implement necessary training. It also is recommended that the mentor plan ongoing weekly meetings to stay up-to-date with the intern’s progress. Use care in identifying a seasoned staff member who “buys into” the importance of utilizing interns. The person should realize that the purpose of an internship is twofold. Interns will provide useful assistance for the organization while also gaining on-the-job training that assists them with their future career search.

Activities Beyond Work Tasks

Interns not only want their internship experience to be an opportunity for personal and professional development but also an enjoyable experience. Internships should be positive, worthwhile experience for the business and students. There are many ways to make the internship both memorable and
engaging for both the student and the employer; consequently this translates into more than including interns in meetings and having them become members of project teams.

- **Social Activities:** Whether it is employees and interns going out to lunch, or employees taking interns to a local baseball game, these kinds of activities provide a great opportunity to get to know one another on a more personal level. They also provide interns a chance to get to know other interns and employees with whom they have not worked. Social activities are typically rated by interns as one of the top highlights of their experience.

- **Professional Development Activities:** There are a number of professional development activities that are beneficial to interns, employees and the company.
  o **Community Involvement:** Volunteering at a non-profit organization or community event will not only be a great opportunity for interns and employees to get to know one another, but it serves as an excellent public relations opportunity. These activities also familiarize students with the community and new activities. In fact, this may provide an opportunity for them to grow personally and get involved in something outside of work.
  o **Training classes and/or seminars:** Help interns develop their professional skills by allowing them to sit in on meetings and work with employees in other departments for a day. Provide opportunities for interns to attend career development events/seminars in the community or to learn new skills. Interns will learn new concepts they can use during their internships and future careers.

**Working with College Students**

As an employee or business owner, it is understood that your business’ needs take priority. However, the primary goal of most interns is to get a degree. It is important that businesses realize that school and classes must remain a top priority for interns. The internship position should enhance their learning experience. At the same time, understand that for most interns this is a new experience and they may need support in balancing their schoolwork and internship.

Schedule your interns to meet your needs yet not exceed their capabilities. Agree on a set number of hours interns will work each week. Consider offering flex-time to given interns the freedom to plan their schedules on a weekly basis. Flexibility allows interns to arrange their work schedule around time to work on group projects, study for tests, etc. If you find students taking advantage of flex-time, but you are consistently having trouble meeting the allotted number of weekly hours, you may need to jointly review their schedule and pinpoint the hours they are able to work each week. In summary, take time to understand your intern’s obligations outside the internship, and work with the student in setting and adjusting his or her schedule.

**Evaluating Your Intern**

An internship can only be a true learning experience if constructive feedback is provided. An effective evaluation will focus on the intern’s initial learning objectives identified at the start of the internship. Supervisors should take time to evaluate both the student’s positive accomplishments and areas for improvement.
Informal Evaluation Throughout the Internship

Interns will look to their mentors and/or supervisors to help them transition from the classroom to the workplace. It is recommended that mentors regularly meet with interns to receive and provide feedback concerning their performance.

During these meetings and informal discussions the students may:

- Report on a project’s status
- Ask questions
- Learn how their work is contributing to the organization
- Participate in evaluating their strengths
- Discuss areas needing growth and development
- Get insight about what work lies ahead

The intern will seek feedback throughout the duration of the internship. It is up to the employer to provide constructive input and feedback periodically in support of the students learning.

Mid-Term and Final Evaluation

At the mid-term and as the internship draws to a close, the intern should undergo a more formal evaluation by the supervisor or mentor to provide concrete feedback in a manner that benefits the student. Mid-term evaluations provide an opportunity to correct or address issues, or to re-direct the intern into a more beneficial path thereby avoiding a negative outcome. Final evaluations are helpful when determining the intern’s overall success within the company and for future internships or employment upon graduation. Refer to Appendix B for Employer Evaluation of Student Intern. It is recommended this form be used for both mid-term and final evaluations of your intern.

Evaluating Your Internship Program

Creating and building a successful internship program is just the beginning. Evaluating your internship program on a regular basis will help you connect more effectively with students and provide you with the best opportunities for discovering future business leaders. Evaluations will encourage improvements, and these developments will continue to keep both the interns and your employees satisfied with the program.

Exit interviews can help the firm meet students’ internship expectations and goals. In addition, they can provide a ‘window’ into the firm’s organization and create opportunities for improvement. Who better than the student themselves to provide input and recommendations for future program success. Refer to Appendix F for a Sample Internship Exit Interview.

What if an Internship is Not Working Out?

As you can see, there are many factors involved in developing a successful internship. What can you do if students are dissatisfied with the experience or aren’t meeting expectations?
There are various reasons an intern may not be successful or fully engaged in the internship position. He or she may feel unchallenged or overwhelmed. The intern may not fully understand his or her role or have received proper, ongoing feedback. The available workspace and/or equipment may be inadequate for accomplishing job tasks. The student also may have unrealistic expectations, trouble managing time or be ill-equipped or unable to adapt to the business culture.

The three keys to avoiding these types of issues involve:

- **The selection process.**
  - Have an efficient and effective selection process.
- **The orientation.**
  - Clearly communicate goals and expectations to the intern (beginning in orientation).
- **The mentor and/or supervisor.**
  - Make sure the mentor and/or supervisor understands his or her responsibilities prior to the internship starting.

Programs may have been underdeveloped, contain inefficiencies, or lack elements necessary for interns to succeed. Reasons for failure may include lack of support from top management, lack of consistency, poor or inadequately defined required skill sets, or allowing the program to languish over time without taking the time to improve it. While budget cuts and changes in management may be a powerful factor in program's failure, many of these problems can be avoided.

Make sure the program is well-established by incorporating the following:

- Understand the role of student internships and your business; evaluate whether or not your business is in need of, or may benefit from intern(s).
- Make sure top management is fully supportive of the internship program and understands the benefits of hiring interns.
- Include the staff in development of the internship program and show them how they can benefit from it (such as helping with projects).
- Involve several individuals in operating the internship program.
- Ensure all internship program policies and guidelines are clearly written and easily accessible.

If, for whatever reason, you experience problems with an intern, be sure to clearly, openly and regularly communicate with him or her. Meet to express your concerns, objectively listen to the intern’s perspective, and offer assistance and suggestions. If the intern is not responsive to the situation, or doesn’t improve with the addressed areas, allow the intern the opportunity to leave on his or her own terms, or consider respectfully letting the intern go. Remember, because most internships are only for a brief period of time, dismissing interns may not always be the best answer. Interns serve as ambassadors for your business – whether their experience was a good or bad one.

“You can only become truly accomplished at something you love. Don’t make money your goal. Instead, pursue the things you love doing, and then do them so well that people can’t take their eyes off you.”

Maya Angelou
**Other Resources and Contributing Materials**

For more information from the National Association of Colleges and Employers visit www.naceweb.org

Adapted from materials contributed by Allison Hatch, InternNE Program Coordinator. The Intern Nebraska Program. www.InternNE.com


**Contact Us**

Have specific questions related to this guide or Allan Hancock College Internships?

Contact: Emily Smith, esmith@hancockcollege.edu, (805) 922-6966, ext. 3820

“Jobs have never been more important and students as well as their parents and the community at large are increasingly focused on how the information and skills students are learning in the college classroom will help them in the workplace.”

Kate Zemike, Making College Relevant

*New York Times*
Appendix
Allan Hancock College Internship Position Description

This form can be completed and submitted online at http://www.hancockcollege.edu/stem/internships/ - Click the link for Employers

COMPANY INFORMATION (Please complete all items):

Organization/Business Name:________________________________________________________

Contact Person/Internship Supervisor: _____________________________________________ Title: ________________

Street
Address:________________________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip: ___________________________________________________________________

Phone: ___________________________ Fax: ___________________________

Web Address: ___________________________ Email: ________________________________

INTERNSHIP INFORMATION:

Internship Position Title: ________________________________

Position Description (what tasks will an intern perform)?

Application Procedures:

Application Deadline (if applicable): _______________ Hours per Week: ____________
Number of Weeks: ___________ How many positions do you have available? ___________

Indicate the semesters this position is available: Fall Spring Summer

Academic Preparation or Experience, if required: _________________________________

What is the rate of pay or stipend?

______________________________________________________________________
## Employer Evaluation of Student Intern

Student: ____________________________  Organization/Firm: ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Exceptional (Always demonstrates this ability; consistently exceeds expectations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Commendable (Usually demonstrates this ability; sometimes exceeds expectations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fair (sometimes demonstrates this ability; meets expectations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Uncomplimentary (Never demonstrates this ability; does not meet expectations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory (Never demonstrates this ability; does not meet expectations)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If any criteria are not applicable to this internship experience, please leave the response blank.

### A. Ability to Learn

1. Asks pertinent and purposeful questions  
2. Seeks out and utilizes appropriate resources  
3. Accepts responsibility for mistakes and learns from experiences

### B. Reading/ Writing/ Computation Skills

1. Reads/comprehends/follows written materials  
2. Communicates ideas and concepts clearly in writing  
3. Works with mathematical procedures appropriate to the job

### C. Listening and Oral Communication Skills

1. Listens to others in an active and attentive manner  
2. Effectively participates in meetings or group settings  
3. Demonstrates effective verbal communication skills

### D. Creative Thinking and Problem Solving Skills

1. Breaks down complex tasks/problems into manageable pieces  
2. Brainstorms/develops options and ideas  
3. Demonstrates an analytical capacity

### E. Professional and Career Development Skills

1. Exhibits self-motivated approach to work  
2. Demonstrates ability to set appropriate priorities/goals  
3. Exhibits professional behavior and attitude
Appendix B  
(Page 2 of 2)

F. Interpersonal and Teamwork Skills

1. Manages and resolves conflict in an effective manner  
   1  2  3  4  5
2. Supports and contributes to a team atmosphere  
   1  2  3  4  5
3. Demonstrates assertive but appropriate behavior  
   1  2  3  4  5

G. Organizational Effectiveness Skills

1. Seeks to understand and support organization’s mission/goals  
   1  2  3  4  5
2. Fits in with the norms and expectations of the organization  
   1  2  3  4  5
3. Works within decision-making channels  
   1  2  3  4  5

H. Basic Work Habits

1. Reports to work as scheduled and on-time  
   1  2  3  4  5
2. Exhibits a positive and constructive attitude  
   1  2  3  4  5
3. Dress and appearance are appropriate for the organizations  
   1  2  3  4  5

I. Character Attributes

1. Brings sense of values and integrity to the job  
   1  2  3  4  5
2. Behaves in ethical manner  
   1  2  3  4  5
3. Respects diversity (religious/cultural/ethnic) of co-workers  
   1  2  3  4  5

J. Open Category: Industry-Specific Skills

Are there any skills or competencies that you feel are important to the profession or career-field (represented by your organization) that have not been previously listed in this evaluation? If so, please list these skills below and assess the intern accordingly.

1.  
   1  2  3  4  5
2.  
   1  2  3  4  5
3.  
   1  2  3  4  5

K. Comments:

L. Overall Performance (if I were to rate the intern at the present time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This assessment was reviewed with intern on (Month/Day/Year)

__________________________________________________
Evaluator’s Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Title/Position: ____________________________ Phone: ____________________________
Appendix C
SAMPLE: "OFFER" LETTER

Date

Student’s Name
Student’s Address

Dear (Student’s First Name):

Thank you for expressing interest in (Company Name) and for taking the time to interview with our firm. On behalf of all of us at (Company Name), I would like to extend an offer to you for employment through the Internship Program. This offer is for full time / part time employment, xx hours per week, for the period of xx – xx. Your starting wage will be $ per hour / month.

Contact me at (phone / email) no later than (date) to accept this offer and to firm up your start date.

Congratulations! I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)
(Your Title)
Appendix D
SAMPLE: “REJECTION” LETTER

Date

Student’s Name
Student’s Address

Dear (Student’s First Name):

Thank you for your interest in the internship position at (Company Name). We appreciate the time you took to apply and we were excited to receive your materials and hear more about your educational progress and professional interests. You have much to be proud of.

We have reviewed your application and finalized our selection process. The internship program received an overwhelming number of qualified applications in a very competitive year. Unfortunately, at this time we are unable to make an offer for employment in the internship program. It was a difficult decision.

Thank you again for taking time to interview for the position. We appreciate your interest in (name of company) and wish you continued success as you explore new career and internship opportunities.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)
(Your Title)
Experience shows that employers who take adequate time at the beginning of the internship to orient the student to their organization derive productivity and effectiveness more quickly than those who do not. To help your student intern adapt to their new position, take time to provide an orientation.

Intern _________________________________________  Date __________________________
Supervisor _____________________________________

Welcome and Introduction

**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 Organizational Structure**
- □ Who reports to whom?
- □ Who, specifically, is the intern’s supervisor?
- □ What is the intern’s department responsible for?
- □ Who makes the final decisions and how are they made?
- □ Which personnel can answer different kinds of questions?

**Outline Organizational Rules, Policies, and Expectations**
- □ Is there special industry jargon?
- □ What are the specific work standards and procedures?
- □ What access to the supervisor/mentor will the intern have?
- □ How should the intern process requests?
- □ Explain office procedures, telephone system, handling mail, answering telephones.
- □ What are the approved forms of correspondence?
- □ What are specific safety regulations?
- □ Explain the procedure for reporting the progress of the project.
- □ What periodic forms or reports need to be completed?
- □ Are there security or confidentiality issues the intern should be aware of?
- □ Review dress code, maintaining their work space and any other pertinent information they need to know about the company.
- □ Provide an introduction to all of the employees that the intern will be working with and explain their duties.
Appendix E
Sample Orientation Checklist
(Page 2 of 2)

Define the Intern’s Responsibilities
□ Review with the intern their job/project assignment(s).
□ Show the intern where all the tools they will need for the job/project is located and explain their usage, if the intern is not familiar with them.
□ Provide the intern with any training that may be required to do their job/project.
□ What resources are available to the intern?
□ What tasks can be completed without supervisory approval?
□ Discuss how the intern should interact with clients and vendors.

Supervising the Intern
□ Make sure the supervisor/mentor is available for questions. Periodically check on the intern to see if they have any questions or concerns.
□ Offer feedback, keep the doors of communication open.
□ Listen to the intern, ask if they have questions that have not been previously answered.

In general, supervisors should
□ Clearly define expected outcomes and timelines upon origination of the internship.
□ Provide frequent, honest feedback to the intern, as this is a learning experience, as well as a job.
□ Present opportunities for students to develop skills necessary for success in your industry, providing any initial instruction or information as required for skill development.
□ Communicate regularly with Allan Hancock College Internship Specialist.
Appendix F
Sample Internship Exit Interview

Schedule in advance to give the student opportunity to prepare thoughts and questions. Avoid scheduling on the student’s last day on the job so that there is time to take care of any action items that come up.

Exit Interview Steps

1. Explain the purpose of the exit interview (student feedback to employer about the program)
2. Encourage the student to be as candid as possible
3. Explain that you will be taking notes
4. Begin with less sensitive questions to put the student at ease
5. Gradually move into areas of greater sensitivity
6. Ask the student if he/she has any remaining questions or suggestions for improving the internship program
7. Conclude by thanking the student for his/her time and honesty

Exit Interview Summary

Name:___________________________________________ Date: _____________________________
Department: _____________________________________ Supervisor: ________________________

Company property returned:
   _____ Keys
   _____ Badge
   _____ Other

1. How similar was your actual assignment to your expectations?

2. How would you rate (company name) as a place to work?

3. How well did your experience provide information about your chosen field?

4. What was the best part of your intern experience?

5. What was the worst part of your intern experience?

6. Would you recommend (company name) to other students for an internship assignment? Why or why not?

7. What suggestions do you have for improving the internship program?

8. Include any other comments you would like to write down