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UNC Asheville Career Center Internship Guide for Employers

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I. Introduction

During the 2011-2012 academic year, over 200 UNC Asheville students completed an internship for academic credit. Internships have become an essential piece of the educational experience for college students. As students prepare for the professional world by immersing themselves in academic coursework, an internship is often a required component to complete a college degree. Internships help students build their resumes for employment or graduate study after graduation. Interns help employers by providing additional staffing and enhancing the workplace by sharing their valuable perspective.

The purpose of this guide is to provide employers with basic information about internships and how to hire interns from UNC Asheville. Specific questions not answered in this guide may be directed to the UNC Asheville Career Center.



UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
ASHEVILLE
CAREER CENTER

259 Highsmith University Union
career.unca.edu
career@unca.edu
828.251.6515

II. Definition of an Internship

Student work and observation experiences go by a number of different names, including internships, co-ops, practicums, externships and part-time jobs. Sometimes it's hard to tell what an experience should be called—definitions can vary among schools and employers. Following are some general definitions.

Internship: An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill development in a professional setting. Students may earn academic credit from a degree-granting, educational institution. This work/learning arrangement for academic credit is overseen by a faculty member designated by the academic department within the student's declared major. The work/learning experience is usually the length of a semester, may be part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid. A learning agenda in the form of specific learning objectives is established prior to the start of the internship. The internship also may include one or more forms of reflection integral to the experience to distinguish it from a volunteer position or job. Should a student choose not to earn academic credit for the internship experience, then the student should work with their Site Supervisor to assure appropriate learning goals are established and met upon completion of the internship experience.

Cooperative education: Cooperative education provides students with multiple periods of work in which the work is related to the student's major or career goal. The typical program plan is for a student to alternate terms of full-time classroom study with terms of full-time, discipline-related employment. Since program participation involves multiple work terms, the typical participant will work three or four work terms, thus gaining a year or more of career-related work experience before graduation. Virtually all co-op positions are paid and the vast majority involves some form of academic credit.

Practicums: A practicum is generally a one-time work or service experience done by a student as part of an academic class. Some practicums offer pay, but many don't. Almost all are done for academic credit.

Externships/job shadowing: An externship or job shadowing experience allows a student to spend between one day and several weeks observing a professional on the job. Such experiences are unpaid, however some colleges and universities pick up travel and/or living expenses. Externships and job shadowing experiences are generally not done for academic credit.

Part-time job: Part-time jobs, although important because of the transferable skills they allow the student to acquire, are done primarily for the student's monetary gain and to fill a basic position within the place of employment. Students are employees and are expected to learn tasks of the job in order to complete the work adequately but not necessarily for personal development. With a part-time job, there is typically no specific start or end date required and the supervisor serves as an authority figure to whom the employee reports.

III. Developing an Internship Program for Your Organization

Your organization can gauge its potential for being an effective internship site by conducting this organizational audit:

How serious is my organization about hosting an internship program?

- Is my organization committed to working with a university?
- Will my organization's culture be supportive of an internship program?

What can interns do for us? What are our goals?

- Does my organization have meaningful work for interns to complete? Are there special skills we need in interns?
- Do we want to use the internship program to identify, test, and recruit interns as potential new employees?
- Would an intern's naiveté and inexperience actually be an asset for our organization, providing a fresh perspective on our products or services? Or would a naïve intern actually be dangerous to self and to others in certain positions?

What human resources do we have to support an intern?

- Can my organization provide an individual with efficient supervisory skills to work with interns?
- Can my organization provide an individual with sufficient time to organize the program?
- In which departments might interns work?

Does my organization have the time to support an intern?

- What is the best time of year for my organization to host interns?
- What should the duration of individual internships be?

What physical resources do we have to support an intern? For example,

- A safe, adequate workspace
- Access to computers, internet, telephone and fax
- Parking
- Access to people who would be colleagues, resources, or internal clients

What financial resources do we have?

- Will my organization be able to afford to pay a salary to interns? If so, how much?
- What remuneration, instead of salary, can we provide? (Parking, paid conferences or workshops, gift certificates, stipend, etc.)

*The Organizational Audit was originally printed in *The Internship as Partnership* by Bob Inkster and Roseanna Ross (published by the National Society for Experiential Education in 1998.) In consultation with the authors, Intern Bridge offers the revised list, above.*

IV. Writing an Internship Description

Draft an internship/job description that clearly explains the intern's duties. A good description will structure the experience for the intern and for your organization to measure goals and accomplishments during the internship experience. Producing effective position descriptions involves the development of challenging work assignments that complement students' academic programs. A basic way to do this is to design a preliminary list of work activities that will fit the needs of your department/organization. Later, when the interns are selected and join your team, you will have a chance to review the work activities and modify them according to the interns' knowledge and personal work/learning goals.

Consider including the following:

- The purpose of the internship and how it contributes to the organization's overall mission
- The essential activities/job functions that will be required of the intern
- The name of the department where the intern will work
- The expectations regarding outcomes of tasks/projects
- The physical and mental requirements of the internship—this may include a list of the academic majors suitable for the internship, the GPA, class standing and any technical or job specific skills the intern would need to perform the internship successfully
- The length and required number of hours per week for the internship
- The supervisor responsible for mentoring and evaluating the intern's progress
- Any training that will be provided
- The application and selection processes and who will be the contact for questions related to the description

V. Recruiting Your Intern from UNC Asheville

Internship information is publicized among students and alumni through our online job posting system (RockyLink) and through our academic departments. Employers also have opportunities to promote their internships in person at our job fairs. Serving as a clearinghouse for information on internships and other job opportunities, the Career Center can work with companies and community organizations to develop and promote internships.

Option #1: Use RockyLink



Registration:

1. Click on the RockyLink logo on the Career Center website: career.unca.edu
2. Choose "Employer."
3. If you are not a current user, click on "Register and Post Job" and follow the directions on that page.
4. Complete all sections. Required * fields are marked with an asterisk.
5. Click on the "Next" button.
6. To post an internship, enter the information under "Position Information."
7. Once you have registered and posted a job, both your account and job will be in pending status. An administrator will review both your account and job. If your registration is approved, you will receive an email notification.

Option #2: Email the Career Center

Email a description of your internship opportunity and application instructions to: career@unca.edu

If you need assistance in posting an opportunity or would like to gain a better understanding of how to develop an internship program with UNC Asheville students, contact: Tommasanne Davis, Internship & Employer Relations Coordinator, 232-5099, tdavis4@unca.edu.

VI. Legal Implications of Unpaid Internships

Employers who think about hosting a student intern often consider an intern as possible “free labor.” Employers should be aware of and ensure compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) before classifying an intern as an unpaid “trainee.” If an intern is considered an “employee” for purposes of the FLSA, then the employer must pay its interns at least the minimum wage. “Employee” is defined by the FLSA as “any individual employed by an employer.” Under the FLSA, to “employ” means “to suffer or permit to work.”

The U.S. Department of Labor specifies that an internship can legally be unpaid ONLY if:

1. The training, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to that which would be given in a vocational school;
2. The training is for the benefit of the trainees or students;
3. The trainees or students do not displace regular employees, but work under close supervision;
4. The employer who provides the training receives no immediate advantage from the activities of the trainees or students and, on occasion, the employer’s operations may even be impeded;
5. The trainees or students are not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the training period; and
6. The employer and the trainees or students understand that the trainees or students are not entitled to wages for the time spent in training.

For more information about how the Fair Labor Standards Act applies to unpaid interns, please see *Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs Under The Fair Labor Standards Act* on the US Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division website at <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf>.

VII. Internship FAQs

How much, if anything, does an intern get paid?

If any of the six criteria (see section VI) are not upheld, the intern must be paid the minimum wage or a higher hourly rate if qualified; the intern will then technically be considered an employee, according to the US DOL. The employer and intern will agree that the intern will receive college credit, a small stipend in place of wages, or both if applicable.

Does the company have to provide workers' compensation?

Workers' compensation is provided to replace wages and medical care programs for an employee whose injuries or illnesses are work related. For more information, visit the US Department of labor's Office of Workers' Compensation at:

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/owcp/>

Can an employer ask colleges and universities to sign a "hold harmless" or indemnity agreement?

Some internship employers request UNC Asheville faculty and staff to sign indemnity and hold harmless agreements, transferring from the employer to UNC Asheville the liability for personal claims, wrongful death or property damage arising out of the performance of their student internship program. The University of North Carolina system counsel noted that there is a list of "prohibited contract clauses" that the NC Attorney General has published for state agencies (including UNC schools). Number three on that list of prohibited clauses is "Hold-Harmless or Indemnification Clauses, Both in Tort and Contract, in Favor of the Contractor." Therefore, UNC Asheville and all state agencies actually lack the authority to indemnify and hold harmless another entity, and no UNC Asheville faculty, staff or student should sign such an agreement.

Does the student assume any responsibility for liability?

Students participating in the North Carolina University system, whom are engaging in paid or unpaid internships for academic credit only, may purchase liability insurance through the University to cover damages because of property damage, bodily injury or personal injury due to their participation in a UNC Asheville credit bearing internship program.

What are the steps that need to be taken when paying an intern?

If payments will be made at regular intervals or on a pay period, the employer should check with their own Human Resources department.

Does the company have to provide unemployment compensation?

Typically, interns are not eligible to receive unemployment compensation because they are hired for an end-date position. The Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs provide unemployment benefits to eligible workers who become unemployed through no fault of their own and meet certain other eligibility requirements. Human Resources professionals or payroll professionals can advise to verify payment methods. If the intern is to receive a stipend, the amount will be paid upon completion of the internship. The stipend amount and date of pay should be stated in a written contract or agreement.

VIII. Successful Internship Practices

Once you have hired an intern, consider from their perspective the basic information and arrangements they need to know:

1. Give the intern real work.

It can't be said too many times that interns want to work and learn. An internship can help you get a job done that you couldn't otherwise. If you've brought on an intern as a recruitment tool, then how will you be able to assess their abilities? It just makes sense to utilize your interns well.

2. Do what you say, and say what you do.

Be honest with your interns about what they can expect during their internship. If the job will require stuffing some envelopes, then make that clear. Honesty doesn't cost you anything, and it will make the interns feel that much more respected.

3. Interns like feedback.

Remember that interns are students, and they may not have the business skills and experiences that you take for granted. If your intern makes an oversight, just pull him or her aside and explain how the situation should be handled in the future.

4. Interns want to be included too.

Is there a staff meeting that they can attend? Can they quietly tag along to that next project meeting? Please include them in the daily life of your workplace. If you provide more perspective on the intern's work, the product will be much better.

5. Please explain.

When you assign work, make sure you give a detailed explanation. While the work may seem trivial and obvious to you, it may not be obvious to someone who's never done it before.

6. They want/need a mentor.

Make sure that interns have a mentor or supervisor to provide guidance. Make it someone who truly likes to teach, and the experience will be even better.

7. A minute of your time please.

The best mentor in the world is useless if he or she can't or won't spend the necessary time mentoring. As newcomers, interns may not speak up if they're feeling ignored, so the burden of making sure they're okay is on the mentor. If the busiest person in the office wants to be the designated mentor, he or she should schedule regular times to meet with the intern.

8. Be prepared.

That wonderful day has arrived and the intern goes to start their internship only to learn that no one knew they were coming, and there is no place for them to work. Provide a "welcome" for your new intern(s).

9. Um...I need a chair.

It is amazing how many employers hire an intern and don't think about the fact that they will need a desk, chair, phone and a computer in order to do the task assigned. If you want to get a job done, you need to supply the intern with the tools to do the job.

10. Show me the money (as best you can).

While each internship experience is different, and each industry has its own personality, remember that interns have expenses. Your organization may not be in a position to pay much, but paying at least minimum wage can help. You also can help pay for parking, take them to lunch every so often, or develop other creative ways to assist.

IX. Principles of a High-Quality Internship

The beginning of an internship can often be the defining days for success or disappointment of interning in your organization. When you instruct interns about their first tasks, you are signaling what can be expected in the future. To give the student nothing to do sends the student a signal that this job will be easy --- and boring. This is the last thing that an intern wants/needs, and of course neither do you as the sponsoring employer. Many student interns are unfamiliar with the activities, nature of work, environment, and objectives of the business. Consider an orientation session for the intern to emphasize the partnership and commitment to your student intern and the reinforcement to their potential success. The sooner the intern understands what your organization does and how it operates, the sooner they can assume responsibility and become productive.

Suggestions for the orientation might include:

- Tour the facilities with the intern and introduce them to other employees
- Provide company/organizational materials to read such as newsletters, annual reports, an organizational chart, or memos from the CEO
- Encourage the intern to utilize their break and lunch times by spending time in places where employees gather
- Schedule regular weekly or biweekly one-on-one meetings with the interns
- Offer opportunities to observe (or participate in) professional meetings
- Allow the intern to interview organizational personnel
- Encourage the intern to move around your facilities to observe and discuss work issues with employees

As an intern supervisor you must invest time to establish an important bond with the intern and set a crucial tone for the internship experience.

KEY POINTS:

- Maintain an open channel of communication with formal and informal meetings
- Keep the intern busy and directed towards their learning objectives. Students rarely complain of overwork, but they do complain if they are not challenged
- Provide opportunities for increasing responsibility
- Encourage professionalism by assisting the intern to develop human relations skills, decision-making abilities and manage office politics
- Remember that you are a role model
- Develop connections to support the success of the intern

X. Resources and Acknowledgements

National member organizations can offer excellent assistance. The following organizations and individuals have provided valuable assistance in the development of this employer guide:

Bottner, Richard
Intern Bridge Inc., Total Internship Management
136R Main Street, Suite 3
Acton, MA 01720
800.531.6091
www.internbridge.com

Cooperative Education and Internship Association (CEIA)
16 Santa Ana Place
Walnut Creek, CA 94598
800.824.0449
www.ceiainc.org

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)
62 Highland Avenue
Bethlehem, PA 18017-9085
800.544.5272
www.naceweb.org

National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE)
515 King Street, Suite 420
Alexandria, VA 22314
703.706.9552
www.nsee.org

UNCW Career Center
2035 Fisher University Union
601 South College Road
Wilmington, NC 28403-5924
910.962.3174
www.uncw.edu/career