



## INTERNSHIP GUIDE

### WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is a hands-on, short-term, supervised work experience conducted in a professional setting that is designed to increase a student's knowledge of a specific career field. More than a part-time job or volunteer experience, an internship is focused on learning objectives related to increasing student knowledge, training to develop skills, and quality supervision to guide the intern.

The Indiana University School of Public Health-Bloomington (IUSPH) Office of Career Services looks to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) for internship defining criteria. Therefore, to ensure that an experience is educational and thus eligible to be considered a legitimate internship, all the following criteria must be met:

- The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or to be work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
- The experience has defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
- There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
- There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.

NACE. (2011, July). *A definition and criteria to assess opportunities and determine the implications for compensation*. Retrieved from [http://www.naceweb.org/connections/advocacy/internship\\_position\\_paper/](http://www.naceweb.org/connections/advocacy/internship_position_paper/)

### COMPENSATION AND LEGAL CONCERNS

It is strongly encouraged by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) that organizations pay their interns. Paid internship opportunities can be beneficial in the following ways:

- Can attract skilled interns, can increase intern commitment and reward for contributions
- Can reduce the financial burdens that may require a student to work a second job during their internship (or limit internship opportunities to only those students who are able to afford them)
- Can offset the cost of paying for tuition when a student chooses (or is required) to obtain credit for the internship experience

Our hope is that employers will always financially compensate interns for their work through an hourly rate of pay, weekly or monthly stipend, or by providing tuition assistance. Parking and job-related incidentals should always be paid for by the internship provider, even if the internship is unpaid.

If the internship provider is unable to pay interns, they must abide by the standard set forth under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), a federal law established by the U.S. Department of Labor. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, an employer is not required to pay interns who qualify as "learners/trainees". The Department of Labor developed a six-factor test for identifying a "learner/trainee". These criteria are as follows:

- The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;
- The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;
- The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;
- The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;
- The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
- The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

**All six requirements must be satisfied for the intern to be considered a “learner/trainee” (exempt from FLSA minimum wage requirements).** Please see the U.S. Department of Labor’s website for more information:

<http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm>

It is strongly suggested that unpaid interns work a maximum of 8-10 hours per week during the academic year, and less than 20 hours per week during the summer term. Ultimately, however, the decision is up to the employer and intern to establish prior to the start of the internship. If the employer requires an intern to receive concurrent academic credit for an unpaid internship, they should make reasonable accommodations so the student can attend class or complete assignments as needed.

Unpaid interns should never be treated as or considered “free labor”. They should be given clear and challenging tasks with training, support, guidance, and feedback from the employer to ensure successful learning and task completion. The Indiana University School of Public Health-Bloomington Office of Career Services will take swift action if an intern expresses concern over the professional nature of their internship, which could result in denying recruiting access to an employer for a determined length of time.

## **DEVELOPING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

The best internships are well-planned. Taking the time to plan an internship before jumping right into the hiring process will benefit both the internship provider as well as the intern(s) by managing expectations and removing the “guess work” from the process. The following steps are suggestions for developing a well-planned internship experience. If additional assistance is needed in the development of an internship experience, please e-mail Sarah Cady ([scady@indiana.edu](mailto:scady@indiana.edu)).

Develop a job description for the internship. Describe your organization and outlines duties/projects associated with the internship opportunity.

Map out the position details: what will be the length and time of the internship (i.e. summer, fall, or spring and the number of weeks), what will the application selection criteria look like, what will the working hours be (i.e. full-time or part-time), and will you be compensating the intern(s).

Select a direct supervisor for the intern(s). This supervisor should be the one to assign projects, provide training, answer questions, provide regular feedback, and conduct performance reviews. This person should be made available to the intern(s) either through an open-door policy or through regularly scheduled meetings.

1. Decide upon and develop specific projects and assignments that the intern(s) can work on. If possible, allow the intern(s) to work on the projects from start to finish. This creates a sense of ownership and accomplishment which is an excellent byproduct of any internship. Additionally, let the intern(s) work as part of a team to provide them with an understanding of how different departments interact within your organization.
2. Appoint an Internship Coordinator (as needed) for recruitment and management purposes. This person can be given the task of screening applicants, working with university career services offices, and arranging on-site logistics (i.e. e-mail accounts, workspace, phone use, security clearance, parking permits, payroll forms). This person can also be the point of contact for the intern(s) should they have any questions prior to the start of the internship.
3. Create a training/orientation program for the intern(s). This could be a formal program if you have several interns starting at the same time, or could be as informal as a few meetings between the intern and their direct supervisor. A strong training/orientation should include the following: an office tour, an overview of the organization’s philosophy and history, introductions to relevant staff, a review of the dress code expectations, hours, and other relevant office policies.
4. Set performance criteria for intern(s) and offer regular feedback. This provides the intern(s) with professional development experience while also clarifying employer expectations resulting in quality work performance.
5. Conduct exit interviews at the end of each internship experience. Solicit feedback from your intern(s) about their experience and get their suggestions for improvements. If the intern proved to be someone you would like to work with again in the future, secure their updated contact information.

Adapted from: Indiana University Career Development Center/Arts and Sciences Career Services. (n.d.). *How to build an internship program*.

**\*Please note, we are not lawyers and this information does not constitute bona fide legal advice. It should be used only as guideline for consulting your human resources department or general counsel on legal matters.**