

Design Your Internship

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY • CAREER SERVICES

DETERMINE GOALS

As varied as organizations are in age, size, industry, product or service, so too are their internship objectives. What does your organization hope to achieve from establishing an internship program? Whether a corporate company, small business or a non-profit, it is essential for the people within your organization to understand and agree on the program's purpose. So, assemble key personnel to foster healthy dialogue on goals of your internship program (and put them in writing)! Be sure to voice to your crew that it will take commitment of all for the internship program to be successful!

DEVELOP A PLAN

Thoughtfully write out your internship program plan. Your plan will serve as the framework for your internship position description. Writing a comprehensive plan will help to ensure you meet your program goals and keep you from 'winging it' partway through the internship. When drafting the plan consider these questions:

- **What will the intern do?** Do you plan on hiring this intern for a specific department, project or task? Or will the intern be getting a taste of everything your company does? Spell out every duty to which you expect this intern to be exposed. Just like anyone in the process of learning, an intern will appreciate the structure provided as it helps to ward off lost, confused or bored feelings. Above all, make sure to balance the needs of your organization as well as the abilities and academic goals of the student you seek to mentor.
- **What academic background and experience will you require of the intern?** Decide on the standards beforehand, as this will help to ensure you adhere to your program's goals as well as narrow down the list of contenders to find the best candidates.
- **Will this be a paid internship?** If so, how much? Wages vary widely from field to field, be sure yours are competitive or offer competitive incentives.
- **Who will have primary responsibility for the intern?** Will that person be a mentor or merely a supervisor? Does the mentor/supervisor have management experience? If not, can you offer to this person some basic training in mentoring? Do they enjoy training others? Will they have the time and resources available to coach the intern?
- **How will you assess their performance?** Will it be a formal, written evaluation or an informal conversation over lunch? How often will evaluations take place? Additionally, will you request the intern to evaluate their overall experience and time with your organization? Keep in mind that in order to successfully measure your own program outcome, you should return to the stated program goals and address those outcomes.
- **Where will you put them, physically?** Will they have an office or workspace? Will you assist them with living arrangements, etc.?
- **What resources or training do you anticipate the intern will need?** Will they need approval to access company specific information? Will they need any training to do the tasks assigned? Will they need an identification badge to enter the office each day? What about a parking permit? Do preparations need to be made in advance for their own computer, email account, business cards, etc.?
- **Do you want to plan a program beyond the work you give your interns?** Will there be special training programs, performance reviews, lunches with executives, or social events? Remember, interns are walking advertisements for your organization. If they have a good experience working for you, they're likely to tell their friends — word gets around. A bad internship, by contrast, can only hurt your chances of attracting good students for next year.