

Supervise Your Intern

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY • CAREER SERVICES

Because an internship is defined as a learning experience, proper supervision of the intern is essential. The Site Supervisor serves as a teacher, mentor, critic and boss. The Site Supervisor provides leadership through motivating, delegating, communicating, training and evaluating the intern. Ongoing supervision of the intern is critical to the success of the internship. This is especially true for interns who do not have extensive work experience.

Additionally, the intern will look to the Site Supervisor to assist them with their transition from the classroom to the work environment. Since the internship is an extension of the learning process, the Site Supervisor will need to provide opportunities to bridge the two experiences. Meet with your intern regularly to provide feedback concerning their performance. During these meetings, the interns can:

- Report on the status of a project
- Ask questions
- Learn how their work is contributing to the organization
- Participate in an evaluation of their strengths
- Discuss areas needing growth and development
- Get a sense of what kind of work lies ahead

At the same time you will have an opportunity to coach, counsel and reinforce positive attitudes and performance.

You should anticipate that you will have some interaction with your intern's Faculty Advisor through telephone calls, on-site visits, and written evaluations. The Faculty Advisor will help you find a solution if difficulties occur (intern attendance or punctuality problems, low motivation, unsatisfactory work, or personal conflicts). Also, you should get in touch with the Faculty Advisor if the internship conditions must be altered, such as a change in supervisors, delays in the availability of data needed by the intern to complete an assignment, transfer or termination of an employee involved in the interns' work, or other unanticipated changes.

Encourage your intern to keep a portfolio of work accomplished during the experience. This will help fulfill the intern's academic requirements and provide them with a sense of accomplishment. In addition, it will give you a basis to discuss their professional growth. Specific work documents to include in a portfolio might be any of the following:

- Job Descriptions
- Legislation
- Proposals
- Manuals
- Citations & Awards
- Contracts
- Program Outlines
- Company Newsletters
- Performance Appraisals
- Charts/Graphs
- Correspondence
- Press Releases
- Certificates
- Research Report
- Financial Reports
- Displays & Exhibits
- References
- Survey Reports
- Cost Analyses
- Computer Print-outs

Points to take away

- 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 interns in developing human relations skills, decision-making abilities, and managing office politics
- Remember that you are a role model
- Develop connections

Adapted from Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program, Fifth Edition, by Michael True, Director, Internship Center, Messiah College, Grantham, PA