Considering an Internship Program?

Hosting an internship can be a rewarding experience for both the company providing the opportunity and the student who brings his/her energy and enthusiasm to the position. By nature, internships provide students with the chance to see how classroom learning may be applied to real world experiences. In addition, the company employing an intern has the opportunity to cultivate a potential future employee while imparting knowledge and providing much needed experience. Students seeking internships tend to be enthusiastic, motivated, eager learners. They provide “extra hands” for special projects or research areas, bring a fresh perspective to problem solving, give current employees a chance to learn supervisory skills, and generally enhance the work environment.

Internships differ from permanent positions and require a unique mindset from both the intern and the employer. Prior to engaging in an internship experience, certain guidelines regarding protocol, time frames, and employer expectations must be established. Interns should be carefully monitored during their experience and should be expected to achieve certain learning or work-related goals.

Internships should be meaningful to both the employer and intern, supporting the student’s educational goals while enhancing the company work environment. The relationship with an intern begins well before the internship start date and may continue beyond the final day of on site work.

Consider the following…

What areas of your company could benefit from an intern?
Develop a job description for various internship positions. State clearly the expectations, goals, and objectives for each position.

What type of student best fits each job description?
Consider the skills, knowledge, and abilities required. Are you looking for a specific degree area, major, year in school, specific skills or ability level?

How long would the internship last?
Internships usually last about three months during a summer, although some are longer and coincide with the school’s semester calendar. It is up to the individual employer as to what time frame best fits the company. Regardless of the time of year, internships should have clearly stated beginning and ending dates. The ending of an internship should be clearly marked. If the intern would make a valued employee in a current job opening, changes in title, salary, and job description are to be expected.

What type of compensation can you offer?
Internships may be paid or unpaid. More and more, students are finding themselves paying for their education out of pocket. An internship that provides a paycheck, housing stipend, and appropriate compensation will be much more attractive and bring applications from a larger pool of students.
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Will the student receive college level credit for the experience?
This varies by department and college. Most departments allow students to receive college credit for an internship experience, provided they establish a mentor relationship with a faculty member, enroll in independent study credit hours, and submit progress reports on a regular basis.

How will the intern be trained?
Interns need the same, if not more, training than a new permanent employee. In fact, the entire internship tends to be training. Students should be given the opportunity to develop skills, job shadow, ask questions, and attend conferences and meetings related to the job as acceptable.

Who will act as the internship mentor?
By pairing each intern with a mentor (preferably not someone in a direct supervisory role), the company provides valuable opportunities to the student and encourages connections outside the day to day work environment. Through a mentorship, students and employers find they learn more about themselves and about the overall work environment of the company.

How will the program be evaluated? As with any regular employee, an internship supervisor should provide regular performance feedback to the intern based on goals and objectives stated at the beginning of the work relationship. In addition, the intern provides necessary feedback to the employer regarding the internship experience and program value.

The Oklahoma State University Career Services office provides extensive on-line resources for employers who wish to post job or internship opportunities. For more information regarding specific procedures related to marketing positions on campus, visit our website at www.hireosugrads.com

For more information regarding internship procedures specifically within the College of Arts and Sciences, please contact the A&S Career Services office at (405) 744-7547.