

Internship Guide

Internships are beneficial to both employers and students. They offer employers access to highly motivated students and the opportunity to build a talent pipeline. Interns free up staff time for other projects and ease workload during busy times. Students benefit from internships by gaining hands-on experience and a chance to explore career options.

Criteria & Definitions

According to the [National Association of Colleges & Employers \(NACE\)](#), an internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths. They give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.

Internships meet the following criteria:

- It must be an extension of the classroom and offer ways to apply knowledge gained in the classroom, not simply a means of advancing the operations of an employer or be the work a regular employee would routinely perform.
- Skills or knowledge gained must be transferable to other employment settings.
- There is a defined beginning and end, plus job description and desired qualifications.
- Learning objectives/goals are clearly defined and related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.
- Supervision is provided by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
- Feedback by the experienced supervisor is routinely given.
- Resources, equipment and facilities are provided by the host employer to support learning objectives/goals.

Where to Start

Developing a successful internship program requires planning and organization, so neither the organization nor intern are disappointed with the experience. The clearer you are about goals and how those goals are achieved, the easier it is to implement the program.

Internship development should answer these questions:

- Why do you want an internship program?
- What do you hope to gain from the experience?
- How will you achieve your goals with this internship program?
- What will your intern learn and gain from the experience?
- What tasks/responsibilities do you want your intern to perform?
- Who will train and supervise your intern?
- What resources will be needed?
- Will you pay your intern? How much?

Remember, internships are mutually beneficial — the intern should benefit from the internship as much as your company benefits from hiring the individual. A good program provides opportunities for a student to learn about the employer's work environment and industry.

Benefits for Students

- Provides a full and realistic view of workplace culture and expectations
- Integrates academic preparation with professional challenges
- Builds confidence and success through internship experience
- Encourages contact between U of I students and professionals in their field of interest
- Helps students build professional networks

Benefits for Employers

- Enhances an organization's image and recruitment activities.
- Gives companies opportunities to evaluate and "try out" interns for future job openings without any commitment to hire.
- Allows staff to focus on higher priority projects.
 - Interns can provide staff support on projects and help avoid diverting other employees from specialized areas.
- Addresses turnover problems. Interns are mature and career-oriented.
 - Providing them with the skills to thrive in an organization early on creates a pool of strong, dependable candidates for continued employment who already know the company.
- Provides a cost-effective recruiting tool.
 - Career Services can help connect employers to motivated and highly qualified students, making the search for quality candidates more effective.
- Establishes strong university and community relations.
 - Interns are the first step in building a solid relationship between the university and an industry. These bonds can pave the way for future joint projects of mutual interest.
- Provides a good investment.

- U of I interns are creative and highly motivated individuals. Through mutual commitment and joint achievement, employers are rewarded with a balanced work force and positive investment in the future.

Promotion Resources

There are many ways employers can recruit students and promote on-campus visits, job openings and internships. [View our recruitment resources for employers](#)

U of I observes campus-wide policies regarding posting, advertising and marketing on campus. There are limits to sidewalk chalk advertising, and papering vehicles along university streets and parking lots is not allowed.

When to Advertise

U of I students are looking for internships year-round. Employers can advertise internships any time during the year, but keep these dates in mind:

Summer Internships

Highly competitive summer internships or those requiring background checks, begin advertising in September with November/December closing deadlines. Less competitive internships can advertise mid-January with March/April deadlines.

Fall Internships

Post an announcement by April and continue advertising until classes begin in late August.

For Spring Internships

Post an announcement in October and continue advertising until mid-January.