INTRODUCTION

Now that you have accepted your mission to develop a successful internship program in your business, this guide will serve as a tool to help your organization realize the value internships provide for your organization, and for North Dakota communities by linking our youth to job and career opportunities.

An internship is a student work experience associated with academic credit. It is a mutually beneficial partnership between a student and an employer.

An internship is largely what you make of it. In an internship program, you provide a student with the opportunity to be an integral member of your organization, and to work in areas related to his or her academic or career interests. You should select, orient, and place many of the duties and responsibilities on this individual as you would a full-time member of your organization.

A student can often make a full-time contribution during the months of May through August. However, often internships are established parallel to semester courses, and hours are arranged for the intern to work throughout the week.

A well-developed internship program can bring significant long-term benefits to your organization. These benefits include new perspectives, ideas, enthusiasm, and the most up-to-date practices, as well as providing your organization with an additional workforce for special projects or for filling in the gaps during peak workloads. Interns can also be a great public relations agent for future recruiting and hiring efforts, they are a great way to evaluate potential full-time employees, and can enhance your workforce diversity.

This guide will provide your organization with the information necessary to develop a successful internship program. While the initial development of an internship program may take some time, it will bring long-term benefits to your organization. The students throughout this region are bright, talented, enthusiastic and motivated individuals who are eager to make a contribution to your business by applying their skills. Tap into this potential and see the many benefits it can bring to your organization.
CONSIDER THE BENEFITS

Any size business can benefit by establishing an internship program. Interns bring a sense of freshness into your organization and a continuous flow of enthusiasm and new ideas. Equally important, an intern has been exposed to the most up-to-date ideas and practices within your business sector, and can bring a new perspective to your current operations.

These characteristics are especially valuable in helping your business remain competitive and grow. According to Dr. Richard Florida, Professor of Economic Development at Carnegie Mellon University, the decisive force in a competitive advantage in today’s economy is creativity. In his book, “The Rise of the Creative Class,” creativity is said to be an essential component to “enhancing and revising every product, process, and activity imaginable” and when combined with knowledge is instrumental in the creation of new and useful capital. Interns may not know everything, but their outside perspectives, knowledge, ideas, and questions may provide your organization with the competitive edge it has been looking for.

Consider how an internship program can help your business realize its potential. According to Making your Internship Program Pay Off, with a “well-established plan, “internships can be made to pay off for the interns and the organizations that sponsor them, both financially and in a larger sense.” Here are some of the many ways that an intern can be a valuable resource in your business:

- Employers say that interns bring a fresh perspective and enthusiasm to their team. Interns also provide a link to current curricula and advances in their field/industry
- Employers believe interns can bring a continuous flow of ideas into your organization
- Employers can boost internal morale by bringing in this young talent and fresh ideas
- Employers have the opportunity to work with and evaluate potential future employees without having to make a full-time commitment
- Employers can increase workforce diversity by utilizing interns
- Employers believe that interns are a great resource for projects and can fill the gap during peak workloads
- Employers find that an internship program provides their organization with the opportunity to influence and evaluate future professionals in their field
- Employers find interns to be great public relations agents; students can have a very positive effect on future recruiting and hiring efforts
- Employers find that offering internships enables organizations to develop strong ties with local colleges and universities
- Employers find that an internship program provides them with the most sensible and cost-effective method of seeking their next employee

For Intel Corporation, college internships are essential to recruiting new talent. According to Mike McNulty, Intel’s U.S. intern program manager, “At college campuses, we have an emerging talent pool with fresh perspectives and unencumbered thinking. Getting those people into our pipeline early on is crucial.” Obviously, you do not need to be Intel in order to reap the same benefits!
REALITY CHECK

- The internship program has commitment throughout all levels of the organization
- The internship program is designed to benefit the intern as well as the organization
- The organization is willing to commit the time and resources to ensure the internship program is successful. This includes developing a good plan for the program prior to the intern’s arrival as well as providing and actively seeking feedback throughout the course of the internship program
- There is enough work to keep the intern busy throughout the entire length of the internship program
- There is a strong business case for the internship program; in other words, it makes sense from the standpoint of enhancing the current or future competencies of the business

10 COMPONENTS TO DESIGNING A SUCCESSFUL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM:

1. Determine your mission and objectives
2. Develop a plan
3. Prepare a support structure
4. Establish a formal orientation process
5. Incorporate accountability
6. Continuing development
7. Create a value-added experience
8. Recruiting
9. Legal considerations
10. Exit interviews
1. Determine your Mission and Objectives

As mentioned above, there are many benefits to an internship program, from attaining additional help, enthusiasm, and fresh insight on projects, to evaluating the talents and “fit” of a potential full-time employee. The most important part of designing your internship program is determining your mission. **What is the overarching purpose of incorporating an internship program into your organization?** Are you looking to find your next employee? Do you want to bring some creativity and outside perspectives into your organization? Do you want to learn about the most up-to-date practices being taught about your industry? What does your organization hope to gain?

It is critical to obtain buy-in from everyone in the organization, from the CEO to the mentors. Everyone should be “on board” with the mission of your program to achieve a successful internship experience.

Once the mission of your internship is clearly established, **determine your program’s objectives and put them in writing.** The objectives are the aspects of your internship program that will fulfill your mission. If your mission is to find the next full-time employee for your business, your **objectives** will include:

- Determine how well the individual handles the projects and duties that represent the future scope of employment responsibilities
- Determine how well the individual “fits” with the culture of your organization
- Determine if the intern believes in, and is committed to, the organization’s vision and mission

If your organization is looking to gain new perspectives and ideas, your **objectives** will include:

- Expose the intern to various or specific activities
- Get the individual thoroughly involved in the operations of your organization
- Consistently ask for input and feedback

Greg Furness notes in his article, “Internships bring a fresh outlook to the workplace,”

An internship can be a very positive experience for everyone involved, but the experience needs to be handled the right way. Give interns substantive assignments. Challenge them. Interns aren’t working to gain experience in filing or answering the phone. Interns want to learn and gain practical experience.

When determining your objectives, keep in mind that students have a lot to offer your organization. They desire **challenge** and **responsibility**, and want to **contribute** and make an impact. Tap into their potential. Anything less would severely undermine their ability, as well as the benefits that your organization can attain from the internship program.
2. Develop a Plan

Greg Furness further notes, it is important to “make sure the internship is structured. Define specific objectives. Don’t expect the intern to find things to do.” A well-structured and planned internship program will ensure a great experience and a positive return on your investment.

Develop a plan to fit your objectives. A plan outlines the projects, responsibilities and a set of tasks that will be performed in order to meet the desired objectives during the intern’s time with your organization. Document this information by preparing a description of the projects, duties, and responsibilities, as well as deadlines and expectations. In order for the intern to be productive and successful, an intern will need to clearly understand the duties and expectations. This information can also be used in writing the job description.

A job description is a written summary of the job. It will be necessary when recruiting students for your internship program. This written summary may describe the organization and outline the duties, projects, responsibilities, compensation, and the length and timing of the internship. The job description should provide a realistic preview of what the intern’s role will entail. You may wish to look at the job description of current employees and determine which aspects you wish to expand.

In your plan, you will also want to consider who’s in charge of the intern? Who’s the internship program director/manager? Various responsibilities and roles may come along with this person’s duty. In addition, you will also want to consider planning for a workspace as well as for the resources the intern will need to successfully perform the job. Lastly, decide the level of involvement the intern will have in your organization’s meetings, decision-making, and social functions. More information on all these matters is to come.
3. Prepare a Support Structure

Max Messmer suggests in the article, “Establishing successful internship program,” that,

Every student who comes to your company should be assigned at least one mentor—somebody (other than the department supervisor) who can offer guidance, inside information, encouragement and general counsel. The people who take on mentorship assignments should be chosen wisely: The ideal mentor is someone who not only knows the ropes in your firm, but also enjoys counseling and working with less experienced workers.4

Many interns have concerns about asking too many questions and feel anxiety over which questions are important and which may be regarded as knowledge they should already have.7 This uncertainty can be an unproductive barrier. It is important that an intern has someone they feel comfortable with who can provide them with direction if they reach a dead end. Integrating a mentor into the internship program is one way to address this matter. This provides someone, other than a supervisor or manager, who the intern can go to for support and answers to questions. An “open-door” policy should be established with this mentor enabling access to an individual at any time for answers to questions and help with projects. All questions should be welcomed and encouraged. This will aid in creating an environment in which an intern will feel comfortable asking questions and will also aid in keeping the intern productive.

Identify someone in your organization who would be a great mentor and incorporate them into the internship program. Some characteristics of the mentor:

- Mentor is willing and supportive of the program
- Mentor is clear in their role: helping to orient the intern with the mission, vision, and values of the business, offers guidance, is available for questions and provides feedback, and builds a supporting relationship with the intern
4. Establish a Formal Orientation Process

A formal orientation program is a fundamental means of ensuring that the intern is able to hit the ground running. The orientation process familiarizes an intern with the norms, values, work procedures, and patterns of behavior and dress that are expected in the organization. A mentor or manager should be responsible for the intern’s orientation. The article, “Building effective mentoring relationships,” affirms that an organization’s mission, vision, values, and direction should also be clearly communicated to the intern upon entering your organization.8

Rebecca Ryan points out, “If you want your young talent to hit the ground running, you need to provide them with the tools and resources to do their job on the first day.”9 She offers the following example of an ideal first day. Such a program may not be an exact fit for your business; however, it may provide you with some useful insight.

On their first day, the new employee has breakfast on-site with their mentor. The mentor tells their story about their employment at the company and talks about future opportunities for growth. They agree on goals for the mentoring relationship.

The mentor takes them on a tour, and introduces them to their workspace. The new employee receives a workbook about the company, the products and services they provide, as well as policies and procedures.

The new employee lunches with their manager, who shares the new employee’s job description, first project assignments, and asks for feedback. They talk about how success is measured, and agree on an appointment for the two-week employee review. The manager explains her “open door” management principle: when you need help, ask. From that point on, the employee joins step with their project team.9

It is during the orientation process that the manager should share, or work with the intern to develop, a list of objectives. It is important that the objectives are clear, challenging, and achievable within the amount of time the intern will be with your organization. It is also important the interns understand their role in the organization; and their specific tasks are thoroughly explained and understood. Depending on the flexibility of your internship program, it may be valuable to work with the intern to identify his or her interests. A work plan can be developed that fits your organization’s needs as well as the intern’s interests. This is also a good time to explain the basics regarding customer service and business conduct.
Rebecca Ryan also offers a New Employee Checklist, to include in your orientation process. Some of these suggestions may not fit with your organization. The list follows:

- A message from the president including a Q&A session
- Story Time: why we’re here, who we serve, how the work has meaning
- Personalized passwords to access email, intranet, web, and voicemail
- Schedule for their first evaluation and a fresh, accurate job description describing what they will be doing and how they will be evaluated
- Introduction to their mentor
- Overview of all the training programs available to employees, and how to sign up

5. Incorporate Accountability

Standards and accountability are other important factors in a successful internship program. How well is the intern adhering to the plan? “With appropriate standards and accountability in place, the internship experience can be valuable.”

Nancy Somerick suggests that a weekly supervisor-signed activities report may provide a solution to ensuring the integrity within your internship program. She states, “the report is intended to document the fact that the intern is performing the professional quality work that has been agreed upon” at the beginning of the internship. The intern will be responsible for documenting the “professional quality” work performed each day as well as the number of hours worked. At the end of the week, the supervisor signs and dates the report if it is seen as representative of the individual’s actual performance. This report could also serve as a resource to demonstrate that the intern has met the appropriate requirements to earn class credit.

Implement evaluations and develop a time line to aid in tracking the intern’s performance. Clear goals and explanations, as well as feedback, will ensure that your intern is productive and your internship program is successful.
6. **Continuing Development**

Consider offering interns opportunities to engage in professional development, social events, and networking with full-time employees. Information shared on one’s work performance is also critical to the professional development and growth of the individual. Mentors, supervisors, and employees can provide valuable insight for the intern by sharing their perspectives. This can help the individual progress within your organization, improve their performance, and enhance their professional development. While the intern is with your organization, time should also be set aside for consistent feedback on the intern’s progress. This can serve as a “professional development tool for the intern and clarify employer expectations of what constitutes quality performance on the job.”

7. **Create a Value-Added Experience**

It is important not to underestimate the contributions an intern can make. The structure of your internship program will play a large role in its outcome. Treat the intern as part of the team. Loyalty and a sense of belonging are a likely outcome if the intern feels connected; if they’re in the loop, and informed on key company issues. Create challenge and responsibility. Interns want to be able to apply what they have learned, to contribute and make an impact; knowing that their work makes a difference. Deeply immerse the intern into your business. Ask for feedback. Let them know their opinions matter and that management is interested in their input. Encourage innovative and creative thoughts. Value their input, have mechanisms for mobilizing ideas, and be receptive to both small changes and big ideas.

8. **Recruiting**

Visit [www.ndinterns.com](http://www.ndinterns.com). This Web site has been built as a clearinghouse for internships, an online community to help bridge the gap between students and employers. The site is administered by the North Dakota Association of Career Service Professionals, an organization representing college career service professionals from institutions of post-secondary education in North Dakota.

**Contact the career center.** The career center staff can help you recruit effectively and efficiently, and would be happy to provide you with some tips for successful recruiting. In addition, the career center staff can assist with on-campus informational meetings and interviews, targeted recruitment, and can help arrange for academic credit. Contact information for your local/regional career center is found on ndinterns.com.
Choose your interns carefully. Look for the same qualities in interns that you would look for in your full-time staff. Is the student motivated? Is the student a good fit with the culture, values, and mission of your organization? Has the student completed the appropriate course work and have career goals that coordinate with the intern assignments?

One noteworthy fact addressed in “Good to Great is,” “Whether someone is the ‘right person’ has more to do with character traits and innate capabilities than with specific knowledge, background, or skills.” It is easy to train people, to develop skills, and almost everything can be learned, so look for the values and qualities within the individual that you think would be a good fit with your organization.

Determine the selection criteria for your candidates. Criteria may include academic performance, major, completion of specific courses, required skills and computer proficiency.

If applicable, you may wish to view a sample of their work, or use a variety of screening tools to gain a better understanding of the student’s attributes.

Recruiting students is often market driven. When there are many employers looking for qualified students, sometimes the “extras” make the difference.

Here are some of the ways successful employers have approached the internship job listing:

- Make sure the salary you are considering is competitive with the prevailing market. Career center staff can consult with you on this.
- While the completion of a company’s job application, a cover letter, GPA requirement, a copy of the transcript, year in school and academic major can help you in the screening process, requiring all of these things may serve as a barrier to some qualified students who will not apply. The less you restrict application standards, the wider your pool of applicants. On the other hand, willingness to overcome a lot of hurdles shows the individual’s motivation and sincere interest in your organization.
- Increase visibility on campus through informational meetings and attendance at recruiting events sponsored by campus career centers.
- Some employers offer the same or similar benefits to interns as they offer to their full-time employees.
- It may be necessary to assist interns in finding housing, give a housing allowance or furnish housing for remote assignments.

To ensure that your hiring process is free from discrimination, visit the North Dakota Department of Labor Web site at http://www.state.nd.us/labor/publications/docs/brochures/005.pdf, to obtain important information on employment applications and interviews.
9. Legal Considerations

This is not legal advice, but rather issues you must consider when developing your internship program. Contact your legal consultant if you have any concerns regarding these matters.

Interns are not specified in the language of the law; however, it is recommended that you follow equal employment opportunity laws in addition to federal [http://www.dol.gov/], state [http://www.state.nd.us/labor/], and local laws on matters considering hiring, employment status, wages, and workers compensation.

Do you have to pay wages?
Under Section 34-01-01 of the North Dakota Century Code, an individual’s employment status is defined as follows: *A contract of employment is a contract by which one, who is called the employer, engages another, who is called the employee, to do something for the benefit of the employer or of a third person.*[^12]

Any individual under an internship program that provides a valuable contribution to your business, such that it receives immediate benefit, is most likely considered an employee.

Only non-employees, in the form of public or community service, or fitting the learners/trainees status, are exempt from being paid minimum wage. In this case, you must provide interns, classified as employees, with the same legal rights as all other employees.

Under Section 46-02-07 of the “North Dakota Minimum Wage and Work Conditions Order,” individuals are classified as “student trainees,” if they meet the following six criteria, and are therefore exempt from minimum wage:

1. The training is similar to that in a vocational school
2. The training is clearly for the benefit of the trainee
3. The trainee does not displace regular employees
4. The employer derives no immediate benefit
5. The trainee is not entitled to a job
6. The trainee is not entitled to wages[^13]

To view “North Dakota Minimum Wage and Work Conditions Order,” visit: [http://www.state.nd.us/labor/laws/docs/admin-rules.pdf](http://www.state.nd.us/labor/laws/docs/admin-rules.pdf)

Should the intern be included under your workers’ compensation policy?
To limit yourself from exposure to liability, it would be a good idea to cover your intern under your worker compensation policy even if the individual is not paid. Covering your (paid) intern both protects and limits your exposure to liability.

> Section 65-01-03 ND Century Code[^12]

Unemployment compensation?
If an intern is a full-time enrolled student *earning academic credit* for the work experience, the employer does not need to cover that intern for unemployment compensation as provided in: Section 52-01-01.18.i.10 ND Century Code[^13]
10. Exit Interviews

Exit interviews give you an opportunity to learn how to improve your internship program as well as to enhance the business. Prior to the completion of the internship, attain feedback on the experience and suggestions on how the internship program may be improved. Be sure to get updated contact information if you would possibly like to work with the departing individual in the future.

Sample Exit Interview Questions:

1. What were the benefits of the internship program?
2. Do you believe you participated in a meaningful and challenging work related experience?
3. Was sufficient guidance and feedback given?
4. Did you feel comfortable asking for help or offering suggestions?
5. What suggestions would you offer to improve the internship program?
6. Would you be interested in returning for future employment?
CHECKLIST FOR AN EFFECTIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

- Internship program has organizational-wide commitment
- Mission
- Objective
- Develop a plan
- Add challenge and responsibility
- Develop job description
- Select and prepare mentor
- Contact career center for recruitment strategy

- Intern is a good match with norms, values, and missions of your organization
- Proper workspace and resources
- Orientation process planned
- Instructions for first day arrival

- Welcome student
- Introduce mentor
- Orientation
  - Introduction to staff
  - Introduce workspace
  - Review organization’s mission, values, and functions
  - Review job description and objectives
  - Tour
  - Review policies and expectations
  - Explain open-door policy
  - Explain that the intern’s opinions and input matters

- Maximizing the applications of the interns skills and abilities
  - Projects related to interns major
  - Intern is staying busy
  - Work is challenging
  - Satisfied with assignments

- Intern is staying in contact with mentor
- Intern is held accountable and measuring up to the goals set forth
TIPS FROM AN INTERN

1. **Give us real work!** It can’t be said too many times that we’re here to work and learn. An internship can help you get a job done that you couldn’t otherwise, right? It just makes sense to utilize your interns; we can do more than staple papers and make copies.

2. **Do what you say, and say what you do!** Be honest with your interns about what they can expect during their internship. If the job will require stuffing envelopes half the time, then make that clear. Honesty doesn’t cost anything and it will make them feel that much more respected.

3. **We like feedback!** Remember that interns are students and may not have some of the business skills and experiences that you take for granted. If your intern makes an oversight, just pull him or her aside and explain how it should be handled in the future.

4. **We want to be included too!** Is there a staff meeting we can attend? Can we tag along to the project meeting? Headed to lunch? Please include us in the daily life of your workplace.

5. **Please explain!** When you assign work, make sure you give a detailed explanation. While the work may seem trivial and obvious to you, it may not be obvious to someone who has never done it before. Patience and a few extra minutes at the beginning will payoff later when your intern can produce good work independently.

6. **I want a mentor!** Make sure that interns have a mentor or supervisor to provide guidance. Everyone who has ever had an internship experience can attest to the importance of a mentor in his or her experience. Make it someone who truly likes to teach and the experience will be even better.

7. **A minute of your time please!** The best mentor in the world is useless if he or she can’t or won’t spend the necessary time mentoring. If the busiest person in the office wants to be the designated mentor, he or she should schedule time to spend with the intern.

8. **Be prepared!** That wonderful day has arrived and I go to start my internship only to learn that no one knew I was coming and there is no place for me to sit. Remember that first impressions are lasting impressions, so you should try to make that first day great.

9. **I need a chair!** It is amazing how may employers hire an intern and don’t think about the fact that they will need a desk, chair, phone and maybe even a computer in order to do the tasks assigned. If you want to get a job done, you need to supply the intern with the tools to do the job.

10. **Show me the money!** While each internship is different, and each industry has its own personality, remember that interns have expenses. Your organization may not be in a position to pay much, but anything can help.
WORKS CITED


