Internships at UNLV – An Employer’s Guide

UNLV Career Services is here to assist your organization in the development of a successful internship program. Additional documents and templates will be provided at a later stage to help you create internships that meet the needs of your organization to help foster long lasting partnerships with the community, University, and potential job seekers.

What is an Internship?

An internship is any carefully monitored work or service experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he/she is learning throughout the experience. An internship should look and feel decidedly different than other part-time, full-time, or temporary positions in your organization in that there is a distinct connection to the student’s academic program and learning experience. Students may earn academic credit toward their degrees for approved internship opportunities. For more information, please contact the Internship Coordinator in Career Services.

Characteristics of an internship:

- Typical duration of 3 to 6 months
- Part-time or full-time commitment
- Paid or unpaid (if unpaid it must be part of an education program with academic credit)
- Involves learning activities like observation, creation of learning objectives, reflection, evaluation, and assessment.
- Promote academic, career, and personal development

Internships are NOT designed to be:

- A source of cheap administrative labor
- Temporary solution to short-term or peak period workload
- Menial work unrelated to a collegiate, academic program (ie: gopher, data entry, administrative assistant)

Developing a Quality Internship

In order to develop a successful internship, more preparation and commitment is required than just recruitment. Following the 5 steps outlined in this guide will allow all parties to focus on what matters most to them and alleviate potential problems down the road.

Step 1: Set Goals and Policies for the Internship Program

Identify the goal for your company’s internship program.

- Look at current business activities and consider what ongoing work you would like to expand or projects you would like to initiate or complete.
• Consider projects that are beneficial to your organization and provide challenging learning experiences for students.
• Create a detailed job description for the position.

Identify who will mentor the intern.

• A supervisor should be selected to help teach, train, and mentor the intern. The supervisor should have the resources (including time) to help guide the intern when they have questions or run into obstacles.

**Step 2: Write a Plan for the Internship Opportunity**

Formalize an internship on-boarding process.

• Hold an orientation or provide a handbook that explains company policies and FAQ’s that new interns might have (this should be different from your employee orientation/handbook).
• Identify goals, timelines, workspace, and general description of projects, so that everyone understands the purpose and expectations involved.

Involve the intern in experiences beyond the actual work of the internship.

• Include interns in training programs, social events, and networking opportunities with executives.
• Many companies host an end of the program experience (ie: golf outing, lunch with upper management, reception, etc.) to celebrate the intern’s successes and accomplishments.

**Step 3: Recruitment at UNLV**

Career Services at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas utilizes a comprehensive web-based employer interface called Hire A Rebel CareerLink <hirearebel.unlv.edu> that connects you with students and alumni. This system allows you to manage internship/job postings, register for career fairs, search student resumes, and more!

• Set up an employer account today by calling our Career Services Office at (702) 895-3495.
• Once your employer profile is created and verified in Hire A Rebel, you will be able to post your internship opportunity. Students will be able to view your posting and apply accordingly.
• Hire A Rebel is the centralized hub to assist with the application and evaluation process.
• It is recommended that you start this process three to four months before you expect a student to start his/her internship. The longer the lead time, the better your chances of finding the best applicant for the position.

**Step 4: Managing the Intern**

Give your intern the resources he/she needs to succeed.

• Have the workstation and computer/email access prepared before the intern starts.
• Give the intern a tour on their first day and introduce them to their coworkers and supervisor.
Monitor the intern’s progress.

- Keep in mind this could be a first work experience for this intern. When work is assigned, make sure it is given with detailed explanation. A few extra minutes of explanation will pay off later when the intern produces good work independently.
- Help your intern set goals for completion of various tasks, including daily, weekly, and monthly goals. Guide them to establish a solid work ethic for the future.

Evaluate the intern’s progress periodically and give feedback.

- Communicate progress/feedback with the intern periodically (formally and informally) so he/she is aware of what is working and areas of improvement. The results of the formal evaluation should not come as a surprise at the end of the internship.
- UNLV’s Career Services reserves the right to require onsite visits or conference calls during the internship to facilitate the evaluation process.
- The Internship Coordinator will contact you to share what is expected if this is a requirement for credit and grading purposes.

Step 5: Conduct Exit Interviews

Proving the value of your internship program will require hard evidence that your organization is getting a return on its investment.

- Analyze the intern’s work to the company’s bottom line, productivity, and efficiency. Evaluate non-tangible benefits of having an intern (ie: morale, culture, social and community responsibility, integration of new ideas/technology).
- Common measures may include the number of interns that stay within your organization, the number of requests for interns, and growing numbers of qualified intern applicants.
- Conduct an exit interview to determine if interns are leaving the organization having had a good experience. This provides valuable feedback to upper management for future program planning.

Questions to Consider

Paid versus Unpaid Internships

Internship opportunities can be paid or unpaid. Determine ahead of time if you will be able to compensate your intern. Compensation should be in the form of an hourly wage. Unpaid internships must be part of an education program that earns academic credit. Students are able to receive payment and earn academic credit simultaneously. For information on the Department of Labor’s criteria for unpaid internships relating to for profit companies, go to http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.htm.

International Students

International students studying in the US can obtain internships, but they are bound by some unique visa limitations. Connect with the Internship Coordinator to learn more about these potential restrictions.