



The Greater New Bedford Connecting Activities Partnership

Making the Workplace a Learning Place The Greater New Bedford Employer's Guide to Internships



BENEFITS OF HOSTING AN INTERN

The National Society for Experiential Education defines an internship as “a carefully monitored work or volunteer experience in which an individual has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience.” Internships are beneficial to employers, students and schools. Giving students the opportunity to expand knowledge gained in the classroom and apply it in a work experience improves our workforce skill level and the overall quality of life in the community. This collaboration helps the South Coast retain an educated workforce.

Employer Benefits

Interns can:

- Complete projects that may be low priority and fill temporary or seasonal positions
- Provide cost-effective work without a long-term employer commitment
- Bring new perspectives to your organization and increase productivity

Hosting an intern can allow you to:

- Utilize the highest-rated recruiting strategy for employers (Gardner, Chao, and Hurst 2008)
- Provide an opportunity to train and recruit future workers with low cost and little risk
- Optimize your human resources by assigning special projects and essential daily tasks to interns
- Create relationships with schools to assist and support workforce development
- Contribute to increasing the educational attainment within the community
- Make a positive impact on classroom curriculum and instructional practices
- Give more freedom for professional staff to pursue more creative projects
- Enhance your community image by contributing expertise to the educational experience
- Advance workforce skill levels by encouraging students to stay in the local community

Intern Benefits

- Explore career interests through employer relationship
- Make more informed college & career decisions
- Achieve stronger academics with real-world learning
- Opportunity to work and learn from professionals
- Achieve a sense of accomplishment through contributing to an organization
- Graduate high school with the academic, technical and workplace skills needed for success in college & careers

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is a form of structured and supervised hands-on learning that provides students with practice experience in their chosen fields. Interns work on projects that will benefit an organization and in return the intern learns new skills and expands their knowledge of a career field. It allows interns to apply academic learning and employers to provide hands-on training in a professional setting that illustrates classroom relevance in the professional world.

The following are some standards or guidelines that can be used when hiring an intern:

- Duration is typically a semester, however, depending on the student and/or industry, it can last one month to a full school year
- Generally a one-time experience for high school seniors or juniors
- May be paid or unpaid
- Internships are part of the class curriculum and evaluated for class credit
- Together students and employers can set goals, assess performance and evaluate their experience
- An effort is made to establish a reasonable balance between the intern's learning goals and the projects an organization needs completed
- An evaluation using the online Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan (MA WBLP) must be completed. A Connecting Activities staff member will guide you through this process.

Interns should not be hired exclusively to perform all the monotonous work of an organization. The intern will earn class credit for the skills derived from the work experience. For this reason, we recommend that routine work (which is part of everyone's job) be limited to 20% of the intern's time if possible.

An intern is not a regular staff member. An intern, whether paid or unpaid, is not the same as a full-time employee. They are hired for the short-term and have a short-term perspective. Seeing results is important, and in the limited timeframe the intern is with an organization, the intern should be able to complete something valuable and tangible. We recommend that a project with a start and finish is added to the internship assignment. Interns are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner, observing the organization's rules and procedures as other staff members would.

INTERNAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

When evaluating your organization's needs for an internship program, consider the following questions:

- What does your organization hope to achieve from the program?
- Are you a small organization searching for additional help on a project?
- Will you pay the intern? If so, how much?
- Where will you put your intern? Do you have adequate workspace for them? Will you help make parking arrangements?
- Who will supervise the intern?
- What will the intern do? Be as specific as possible. Interns need structure so they don't become lost, confused or bored.
- Do you want to plan a program beyond the work you will give your interns? Will there be a special training program, performance reviews, and lunches with executives or social events? Keep in mind that interns can become word of mouth ambassadors for your company. If they have a good experience working for you, they're likely to tell their friends and word gets around. A bad internship, by contrast, can only hurt your chances of attracting good students for next year.

These are just some of the questions to consider. Your organization's approach will depend on your specific resources and needs.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACTIVE PARTIES

Employer/Site Supervisor

A professional staff person who has expertise in the intern's work area. This person is responsible for managing the intern, providing assignments to the intern and acting as a go-to person for questions. The site supervisor becomes a mentor responsible for familiarizing the intern with the organization as well as guiding and evaluating the intern's work.

Responsibilities

- Provide orientation and training at beginning of the internship
- Create assignments and provide training that leads to increased knowledge, skills and problem-solving capabilities
- Meet with the intern on a regular basis (weekly or biweekly) to discuss their progress
- Provide the intern with direction, resources, and support necessary to successfully meet or exceed the goals of the internship
- Evaluate the intern's work using the MA WBLP, an online tool designed to structure work-based learning experiences. Formal evaluations will be conducted at the beginning and end of the internship to communicate objectives and track progress. Connecting Activities program staff will provide training on use of the MA WBLP.

Faculty Liaison

Each intern has a Faculty Liaison who evaluates the learning derived by the student in order to assign a grade. The liaison approves the internship placement, creates academic requirements (e.g. keeping a journal, making a class presentation), and assigns grades at the end of the semester.

Responsibilities

- Provide students class credit requirements for their work experience
- Serve as an advisor to interns throughout the semester, providing feedback and guidance
- Address any questions or concerns that arise during the internship, intervene when a problem arises and work toward a reasonable solution in a timely manner
- Review student class work and MA WBLP online evaluations
- Submit a final grade based on the quality of class work, attendance and participation in the internship, and the site supervisor's MA WBLP online evaluations

Connecting Activities Internship Coordinator

Each student has a Connecting Activities Internship Coordinator who secures their placement and keeps track of the evaluation process.

Responsibilities

- Prepare and place students in a quality worksite learning experience connected to classroom teaching and learning
- Contact each site supervisor during the semester to solicit performance feedback
- Facilitate the implementation of the MA WBLP that connects classroom learning to worksite placement
- Meet with employers and intern to discuss MA WBLP evaluation process

Intern

The student who accepts an internship with a company and meets the internship standards and requirements.

Responsibilities

- Meet with Faculty Liaison and Connecting Activities Internship Coordinator to discuss career interests for internship placement process
- Attend all scheduled internship classes at school and internship sessions with employer.
- Submit completed project assignments on or before the due date; and meet all deadlines for internship-related school assignments. Remember internships are letter graded. Students can and will receive failing grades for not completing all of the internship requirements
- Consistently and actively seek guidance and constructive feedback from the internship site supervisor during internship
- Act professionally by adhering to their internship schedule, arriving on time, dressing appropriately, and following through on projects and tasks in a timely and diligent manner

SUPERVISORY CONCERNS

Interns may require developing ways of communicating and working together that integrate and respect differences in work styles. If problems occur, and they may happen, the best approach is usually to speak with the intern. If the employee supervisor feels uncomfortable about discussing a problem, please call the Faculty Liaison at the intern's high school. They will be glad to listen and offer their support.

ORIENTATION

It is important for the intern to feel like a member of a professional team and have a sense of belonging to the organization.

Orientation Checklist

<p>Office tour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of restrooms, break room, mail room, supply room and special purpose rooms • Mail and telephone system operation • Parking locations • Suggested food locations 	<p>Work information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of intern's work schedule • Meeting with employee supervisor • Meetings with individuals who the intern will interact with frequently • Pre-internship meeting to establish work plan • Any other necessary training
<p>HR items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to all staff • Written policies and procedures • Appropriate dress, behavior, correspondence and work space maintenance • Security and confidentiality policies • Safety regulations • HR paperwork • Paperwork for intern's class credit • Parking arrangements 	<p>Organization information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History, mission, values and objectives • Office hierarchy and brief overview of each department • Specific objectives of intern's department and how he or she may contribute • Specific industry jargon • Reading materials such as company handbook, newsletters, annual reports, memos and blogs

PRE-INTERNSHIP MEETING

Before your intern begins working it is important to establish a project for completion and a work plan. The skills and goals of your intern will vary depending on who you hire. Start with the job description and work with your intern to alter his or her responsibilities as needed. Tailor the project to take advantage of the intern's unique skills, interests or goals. It is also important to set performance expectations and make it clear that the intern will be evaluated using the MA WBLP.

In addition to discussing responsibilities and performance expectations, talk about the intern's goals. You and the intern should determine three things: 1) what skills they want to learn; 2) how they plan to learn them and 3) how they will know whether the skill has been learned. Guide the intern with their goal planning and use this for reference during their online MA WBLP evaluations.

ONGOING SUPERVISING AND TRAINING

Intern supervisors should schedule a regular meeting time (weekly or biweekly) with the intern to address questions, discuss project progress, assign new responsibilities and talk about the work experience to date. While completing their project should be a top priority, supervisors should have the interns interact and observe the people and situations that are everyday happenings in an organization. Opportunities for the intern to observe professionals at work in meetings and activities with encouragement for them to participate and contribute when appropriate are great additions.

COMPLETING YOUR EVALUATIONS

Because the intern is earning class credit for their internship you will need to assist with the following:

- **Beginning Evaluation:** After completing a few weeks of the internship, the site supervisor is required to complete the first review of the online MA WBLP to assess the intern's work performance at beginning of their internship. This sets a baseline to measure future improvement in their skill levels and allows you to input the intern's goals into the MA WBLP.
- **Mid-Term Evaluation:** Aside from the regular check-ins, we recommend that the intern supervisor conduct a mid-term evaluation. The intern should communicate their internship experience, identifying areas in which they would like more exposure or responsibility. The supervisor should provide feedback on the intern's performance to date while sharing positive feedback and recommending areas for improvement. Together with the intern you should determine whether the intern's goals are being met and discuss the criteria for their final evaluation.
- **Final Evaluation:** Toward the end of the internship, the site supervisor will complete the second review on the online MA WBLP to assess the intern's work. This is an opportunity to show improvement and growth in the intern's skill levels as well as to provide the intern with feedback on their performance and progress made during their internship. It is highly suggested that the site supervisor discuss the evaluation with the intern and solicit feedback from the student on their perception of the internship experience.

Some Tips On Providing Feedback

Ongoing weekly or biweekly informal evaluations lead to successful internships. By scheduling this time with the intern you are giving them an expected time for questions and comments. Feedback is most valuable when offered objectively and in an encouraging way. An intern needs to hear not only that they are doing a good job, but particularly in what areas and ways. Alternatively, helping an intern to see a personal or professional area which needs improvement and assisting them with developing a plan to do so is just as important.

Too often, critical comments are left until the final evaluation when the student can no longer use the practical setting of the internship for improvement. Some supervisors hesitate to criticize an intern's performance out of concern for the student's final grade. Remember that the intern is ultimately graded on the basis of the learning derived from the work experience, not from the successful performance of work assignments alone. Be sure to solicit insights and suggestions from the intern about the assigned projects. When invited to do so, interns can contribute helpful information.

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