

LUTHER COLLEGE

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THE CAREER CENTER

**INTERNSHIP GUIDE  
FOR EMPLOYERS:**

*DEVELOPING A QUALITY INTERNSHIP  
PROGRAM*

### PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This internship guide is designed to help organizations establish and/or evaluate an existing internship program. By no means is the guide exhaustive. It is meant to be used as a tool to raise questions, make recommendations, and provide some guidelines as to common practices frequently found within strong internship programs. As always, if you have questions or wish to talk more specifically about your internship needs, please don't hesitate to contact the Luther College Career Center.

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*Portions of this guide were adapted from materials from the Technology Council of Central Pennsylvania.*

## WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP

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An internship is any carefully monitored work or service experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what she or he is learning throughout the experience.

Characteristics include:

- Duration can range from one month to one year, but a typical experience usually lasts three months.
- May be part-time or full-time.
- May be paid or non-paid.
- Internships may be part of an educational program and carefully monitored and evaluated for academic credit, or internships can be part of a learning plan that a student develops individually.
- An important element that distinguishes an internship from a short-term job or volunteer work is that an intentional “learning plan” is structured into the experience.
- Learning activities common to most internships include learning objectives, observation, reflection, evaluation, and assessment.
- An effort is made to establish a reasonable balance between the intern’s learning goals and the specific work an organization needs completed.
- Internships promote academic, career and/or personal development.

*Adapted from materials published by the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE)*

### How do internships benefit employers?

- Source of highly motivated pre-professionals
- Students bring new perspectives to old problems
- Quality candidates for temporary or seasonal positions and projects
- Freedom for professional staff to pursue more creative projects
- Flexible, cost-effective work force not requiring long-term employer commitment
- Proven, cost-effective way to recruit and evaluate potential employees
- Visibility of your organization is increased on campus

### How do you design an internship program that meets your needs?

As varied as organizations are in age, size, industry and product, so too are their internship activities. How do you know what kind of program will work best for you?

- What does your organization hope to achieve from the program?
- Are you a small organization searching for additional help on a project?
- Is your organization growing quickly and having difficulty finding motivated new employees?
- Are you a nonprofit that doesn’t have a lot of money to pay, but can provide an interesting and rewarding experience?
- Is your organization searching out new employees with management potential?

If you elect to create an internship experience, there are some additional questions to ponder. Considering the following:

- Will you pay the intern? If so, how much? Wages vary widely from field to field, so be sure yours are competitive or offer competitive incentives.

- Where will you put the intern? Do you have adequate workspace for them? Will you help make parking arrangements, living arrangements, etc.?
- What sort of academic background and experience do you want in an intern? Decide on standards for quality beforehand --- it will help narrow down your choices and find the best candidate.
- Who will have the primary responsibility for the intern? Will that person be a mentor? A supervisor? Both?
- What will the intern be doing? Be specific as possible. Interns, like others in the process of learning, need structure so they don't become lost, confused or bored.

A careful discussion with management can create a consensus on program goals. The program and the internship can be designed to best meet those expectations. As many staffing professionals know, in order for a program to be successful, it will require the commitment of management.

## DEVELOPING WORK ACTIVITIES & MEASURABLE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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A large part of producing effective position descriptions involves the development of challenging work assignments that complement students' academic programs. One way to do this is to design a preliminary list of work activities that will fit the needs of your department. A detailed description of typical tasks will help the college to promote your internship or field experience, and to screen the right candidates for the position. Later, when the interns you select join your team, you will have the chance to review the work activities and modify them according to the interns' knowledge, strengths, interests, and personal work/learning goals.

Employers should strive to present interns with a variety of tasks, while accommodating the needs of the department/organization. Of course, some of the interns' responsibilities will involve repetition, because all work involves some repeated activity. Even so, former interns have commented positively about internship experiences that provide them not only a focused and substantial role to fill, but they are also given broader exposure to the organization in general giving them a sense of how the different departments fit together.

Sample tasks that students have provided sponsoring organizations include:

- performing laboratory tests
- writing handbooks or manuals
- designing posters, charts, graphs
- generating financial forecast and cost recovery reports
- performing software/hardware modifications
- conducting studies and surveys
- developing PowerPoint presentations
- compiling technical reports
- creating academic lesson plans
- conducting research
- generating marketing plans
- conducting training packages
- preparing budgets and financial reports

### **Do you want to plan activities beyond the work you give your interns?**

Will there be special training programs, performance reviews, lunches with executives, social events? Keep in mind that if interns have a good experience working for you, they are likely to tell their friends --- word gets around --- and chances of attracting good students for next year will increase.

**A very important part of your plan should be the assignment of a mentor or supervisor** --- that is, someone from the intern’s department who will be in charge of the intern. This person doesn’t have to be a teacher per se, but should be selected because he or she likes to teach or train and has the resources to do it.

## RECRUITING AN INTERN

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How will you find those ideal candidates to fill your internship position(s)? ***The number-one tip from those who have established programs is to start recruiting early!*** This cannot be overemphasized to organizations that want the very best interns. Begin searching three to four months before you need a student to begin. Starting early has other advantages: the longer you accept applications, the better your chance of finding the best person for the job. The sooner you get one, the longer you have to form a good working relationship with him or her.

### A) Develop an Internship Job Description

This internship job description provides the intern and employer with a clear understanding of expected responsibilities, qualifications, and supervision. Because this form acts as a contractual agreement, be very specific about what the intern will be doing. The student and faculty advisor use the internship job description to establish learning objectives, which they are asked to share with you. The job internship description is used by the Career Center to promote the openings to qualified students. Additionally, you should be sure to include instructions on what application materials are required (resume, cover letter, etc.) and to whom and how they should be submitted.

### B) Advertise Your Internship Opportunities

There are two simple ways to convey your internship information to us: 1) You may create an account on CareerConnection where you can post as many positions as you wish for absolutely no cost (go to <http://career.luther.edu> and click on “Recruiters” for more information), or 2) You may contact our office at 563-387-1025 or [career@luther.edu](mailto:career@luther.edu) and we can post your position for you.

The following table reflects recommended timeframes to recruit candidates for internship positions. Following these recommendations will ensure there is ample time to promote your internship opportunity and select the right student.

For An Internship During	Advertise During
Fall Semester (Sept. – December)	March – April
January Term	August – November
Spring Semester (February – May)	October – December
Summer Term (June – August)	January – April

### C) Collect Application Materials

1. The Career Center strongly recommends that you request, at a minimum, a cover letter and resume from each student applicant.
2. Beyond the cover letter and resume, you may also wish to request other relevant materials such as a writing sample, a portfolio of creative work, and/or a current undergraduate transcript.

### D) Contact Qualified Students for Interviews

**On-site:** If your geographic proximity to Decorah lends itself to an on-site interview, we strongly encourage you to invite candidates to your organization.

**On-campus:** The Career Center regularly hosts employers on campus to conduct screening interviews with candidates. Let us know when you'd like to come and who you'd like to interview, and we'll take care of the rest.

**Phone:** Employers often do phone interviews when geographic distance is an issue.

**Questions you may want to ask a prospective Luther College intern:**

- Why do you want to do an internship?
- What do you know about this organization? (Have they taken time to research you?)
- What led you to your major field of study?
- What leadership roles have you undertaken?
- I'd like to hear a little about your future goals. What do you hope to do after graduation?
- What are your strengths?
- What would you want to have gained or learned by the end of this internship?
- Do you have any questions for me? (Open it up for them to ask.)

**Choose your interns just as carefully as you'd choose permanent employees.** After all, they might be permanent employees some day. You're making an investment; time and money will go into this person. This is where the interview will come in handy: Is the intern truly motivated, or does he or she just want a job? Will the intern fit into your organization's culture? Does he or she have the level of experience you need? With careful consideration of whom you hire at the beginning, you can avoid some of the most common pitfalls of internships.

## ORIENTING AND TRAINING INTERNS

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Many students are unfamiliar with the activities, environment and objectives of your organization. Even though your interns may have worked part-time to support their education, these experiences may not have exposed them to organizational politics, the need for confidentiality, the importance of teamwork or the profit-making orientation of business. It is this orientation and training dimension of the internship experience that emphasizes the partnership role of the sponsoring organization.

The sooner your student interns understand what your organization does and how it operates, the sooner they can assume assigned responsibilities and become productive. You can help this process by providing the following kinds of information about your site:

**Explain the Mission of the Organization**

- How did the organization start? Why?
- What is unique about your product or service?
- Who benefits from your product or service?
- What are the organization's current objectives?
- How may the intern contribute to those objectives?

**Explain the Organization Structure**

- Who reports to whom?
- Who, specifically, is the intern's supervisor?
- What is the intern's department responsible for?
- How are decisions made?
- Which personnel can answer different kinds of questions?

**Outline Organizational Rules, Policies, Decorum and Expectations**

- Is there special jargon?
- What are the specific work standards and procedures?

- When will the supervisor be accessible (days, times, duration) to the intern?
- How should they process requests?
- How do the mail and telephone systems work?
- What are the approved forms for correspondence?
- By what safety regulations must they abide?
- Is there a procedure for signing off work?
- What periodic forms or reports need to be completed?
- Are there security or confidentiality issues the intern should be aware of?
- What is acceptable with regard to dress and appearance?
- How should they maintain the premises and their work area?

#### **Define the Intern's Responsibilities**

- What is the intern's role?
- What projects will be assigned to him or her?
- What resources are available to the intern?
- What training is necessary?
- How does the organization want the intern to deal with clients and vendors?
- What tasks can be completed without supervisory approval?
- Do other employees understand the intern's role?

#### **Monitor the Intern's Adjustment and Understanding of What is Expected**

- Make yourself visibly available to the intern
- Assign someone who can periodically "check-in" with the intern
- Provide feedback and constructive criticism
- Force the intern to ask questions

#### **You can communicate this information in several ways:**

- Take your intern on a tour of the facilities and introduce them to the other employees.
- Give your intern company materials to read such as newsletters, annual reports, an organization chart, or memos from the CEO.
- Encourage your intern to spend break and lunchtimes in places where employees gather.
- Schedule regular one-on-one meetings with her or him.
- Give the intern opportunities to observe (or participate in) professional meetings.
- Allow the intern to interview company personnel.
- Encourage the intern to walk around and observe others at work.

The success of an internship depends on the partnership between representatives of the organization, Luther College and the student. These three parties need to agree on the conditions of the internship, the responsibilities of each party, and the reporting requirements. The site supervisor is the critical link. You guide your intern by providing direction and feedback. If a problem occurs, you counsel the student and contact the faculty supervisor, when necessary.

## **SUPERVISING THE INTERN**

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Students will look to you as a mentor who will assist their transition from the classroom to the work environment. We suggest you meet with your interns regularly to provide feedback concerning their performance. During these meetings, the students can:

- Report on the status of a project.
- Ask questions.

- Learn how their work is contributing to the organization.
- Participate in an evaluation of their strengths.
- Discuss areas needing growth and development.
- Get a sense of what kind of work lies ahead.

At the same time you will have an opportunity to coach, counsel and reinforce positive attitudes and performance.

Luther College students receiving academic credit for their internships will have a Learning Plan they will review with their supervisor before beginning their internship. This Learning Plan must be approved and signed by the student, their site supervisor, their faculty internship advisor and Luther College's internship coordinator.

In addition to spontaneous and informal meetings, site supervisors will also be asked to complete a mid-point evaluation form (so the students know where they stand) and final evaluation form for each student intern. You should consider the quality and timeliness of the work produced to date, ability to take and follow directions, work habits and areas needing growth and development.

Luther College faculty internship advisors and the internship coordinator are available to site supervisors to help find solutions if difficulties occur (intern attendance or punctuality problems, low motivation, unsatisfactory work, or personal conflicts). Also, we ask that you get in touch with the Career Center at 563-387-1025 if the internship conditions must be altered, such as a change in supervisors, delays in the availability of data needed by the students to complete an assignment, a strike by unionized employees, transfer or termination of an employee involved in the interns' work, or other unanticipated changes.

We encourage interns to keep a portfolio of work accomplished during the experience. This will help fulfill the students' academic requirements and provide them with a sense of accomplishment. In addition, it will give you a basis to discuss their professional growth. Specific work documents to include in a portfolio might be any of the following:

- |                      |                          |                       |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Job Description    | • Company Newsletters    | • Financial Reports   |
| • Legislation        | • Performance Appraisals | • Displays & Exhibits |
| • Proposals          | • Charts/Graphs          | • References          |
| • Manuals            | • Correspondence         | • Survey Reports      |
| • Citations & Awards | • Press Releases         | • Cost Analysis       |
| • Contracts          | • Certificates           | • Computer Print-outs |
| • Program Outlines   | • Research Report        | • Photographs         |

## LEGAL ISSUES

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### Do you have to pay interns?

The U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which applies to all companies that have at least two employees directly engaged in interstate commerce and annual sales of at least \$500,000.00, severely restricts employer's ability to use unpaid interns or trainees. It does not limit an employer's ability to hire paid interns.

You don't have to pay interns who qualify as leaders/trainees. The U.S. Department of Labor has outlined six criteria for determining trainee status:

- 1) Interns cannot displace regular employees.
- 2) Interns are not guaranteed a job at the end of the internship (though you may decide to hire them at the conclusion of the experience).
- 3) Interns are not entitled to wages during the internship.
- 4) Interns must receive training from your organization, even if it somewhat impedes the work.
- 5) Interns must get hands-on experience with equipment and processes used in your industry.

6) Interns' training must primarily benefit them, not the organization.

### **Workers' and Unemployment Compensation**

Workers' compensation boards have found that interns contribute enough to a company to make them employees. It's wise to cover interns under your workers' compensation policy even though you aren't required to do so. Student interns are not generally eligible for unemployment compensation at the end of the internship.

### **Keep in Mind**

Even if a student is working through a school program for which he or she is being "paid" in college credits, the student still has the right, under the FLSA, to be paid unless the employer is not deriving any immediate advantage by using him/her.

Paid interns make ideal workers – hungry to learn, eager to make a good impression and willing to perform a multitude of tasks. The relatively small amount of money employers spend on intern wages and benefits is a good investment, because it often produces future, long-term employees.

You should identify the specific terms and conditions of employment (e.g., dates of employment as an intern, including the date the internship will end; compensation; organizational and/or reporting relationships; principal duties, tasks or responsibilities; working conditions; any other expectations of the employer), and should discuss these with the prospective intern, so that there is no misunderstanding regarding the relationship. Also, it may make good sense to document such a discussion with a written agreement stating both parties understandings, and have it signed by both the employer and the intern. **(Luther College provides students seeking academic credit with this form, with signatures required of the faculty advisor, student, site supervisor, and Luther College internship coordinator.)**

If an intern is harassed at your organization, and no action is taken to investigate and respond to the claim, your organization opens itself to the risk of lawsuits. Take time to advise your interns of appropriate workplace behavior, the organization's harassment policy, and complaint procedures.

### **International Students**

The most common visa types employers will see on college campuses when recruiting international undergraduate or graduate students for either full-time or internship positions are the F-1 and J-1 visas.

"An F-1 visa is granted to a person coming to the United States to attend college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school or other academic institution or language training program approved by the U.S. Attorney General for study by foreign students. The visa holder plans to return home after completing studies. This is the most common non-immigrant visa for an international student attending undergraduate and graduate school. Students are granted F-1 status until the completion of the academic program and 12 months of post-program practical training. The purpose of the F-1 visa is to provide an opportunity for study in the United States. Anything outside of study, including employment, is an exception to the visa. Authorization for employment is strictly limited to certain situations.

- The student holding F-1 status for a full academic year and in good academic standing may work off campus. Such work authorization is granted when the student has sustained unforeseen economic hardship. Also, the student may not work for more than 20 hours per week when school is in session, but may work full time during holidays and vacations, including breaks between terms, provided the student intends to register for the next school term.
- Curricular Practical Training (CPT): An F-1 student may perform curricular practical training prior to the completion of the educational program as part of his or her educational experience. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) defines this type of training as 'alternate work/study, internship, cooperative

education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through agreements with the school.

- Post-Completion Practical Training (OPT): This is temporary employment directly related to the student's major area of study that takes place after the student completes a full course of study. Authorization for this training may be granted for a maximum of 12 months of full-time or part-time work. Those on a student visa can only gain authorization once for this type of training."

The above information is adapted from a web article by Rochelle Kaplan, General Counsel for the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). Reprinted with permission of the National Association of Colleges and Employers, copyright holder. For more information on these and other legal issue related to hiring, see NACE web at [www.naceweb.org](http://www.naceweb.org).

Employers can take advantage of a nationwide service provider who handles all the necessary paperwork and processing for international students to work in an organization. The largest provider is:

Immigration Support Services  
1300 Bent Creek Blvd.  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
Phone: 800-437-7313  
Web: [www.immigrationsupport.com](http://www.immigrationsupport.com)