

# Employer Guide: Formal Internship Program

2024 - 2025



CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT CENTER

A formal internship program involves a structured approach to providing students with meaningful work experience in a professional setting. The article "[Best Practices For Internship Programs](#)" by NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) can be used as a reference as you develop a formal internship program. In addition, below are some internship practices adopted by our local partners that our students have found helpful and rewarding:

## **Onboarding Process:**

- Map out your goals and expectations for the intern before they start and get departmental managers and company leaders support.
- To get them settled in quickly, do the following before their first day:
  - Confirm their standard hours of work, and hybrid and /remote work opportunities.
  - Complete all new hire paperwork, including for banking forms and other requirements,
  - If they're working in an office, have their desk space and computer set-up, along with any other equipment needs and access for all the digital tools and services they'll be using
- Give your interns a warm welcome with a training session for all interns on the first day. Walk them through the major processes: HR, dress code, chain of command, and other top-level protocols. Then show your interns the roadmap you've planned for their time with your organization. Give them a chance to see their week-to-week or month-to-month laid out.

## **Internship Project:**

In addition to an intern's day-to-day work, assign the intern a larger project and pair them with other interns or relevant mentors to collaborate on it. At the end of the internship, consider having them present their project and findings to the group and/or leadership.

## **Leadership Involvement:**

Encourage leaders to actively participate by assisting with the internship project, offering guidance and feedback that can help interns develop practical skills. Organize a speaker series where executives and senior managers share their experiences and industry knowledge. Additionally, arrange informal coffee chats where interns can interact with leaders in a relaxed setting, fostering open communication and networking opportunities. Involving leadership in these ways not only enhances the interns' learning experience but also strengthens their connection to the organization.

**Networking:**

To enhance the internship experience, plan social events that allow interns to interact with their peers and managers in a more relaxed environment. Additionally, organize one-on-one meetings for interns with full-time employees to foster meaningful connections and insights into the company. Establishing a mentorship program can further support their development, offering valuable guidance and fostering professional growth throughout their internship.

**Service Initiatives:**

Promote community support, culture, and work-life balance with a planned day of service with the interns and pay them for the day.

**Benefits:**

In addition to the salary offered, consider assisting interns with out of pocket expenses they may incur by working for your company as an intern, such as cost of meals, housing and parking.

**After the Internship:**

Keep in touch with your interns throughout the academic year, especially if you've extended a job offer. The gap between their return to campus in the fall and their graduation in the spring can be long, so staying engaged is crucial. Don't assume that offering a job concludes your responsibilities. Additionally, it's important to maintain connections with promising interns who aren't yet eligible for job offers, such as those entering their junior year, if you hope they will return for future internship opportunities.

**Conclusion:**

Implementing a formal internship program at your company can yield substantial benefits, both for the organization and for prospective talent. By establishing a structured program, you create a clear pathway for interns to gain meaningful, hands-on experience that aligns with their academic and career goals. This not only helps interns develop essential skills but also allows your company to identify and cultivate future employees who fit your organizational culture and needs. A well-designed internship program can enhance your company's reputation as a top employer, attract high-quality candidates, and provide fresh perspectives and innovative ideas. Furthermore, investing in a formal program demonstrates your commitment to professional development and can lead to stronger, more dynamic teams in the long run.