



Sarpy County Internship Program

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Introduction

The Employers Internship Toolkit is designed to assist Sarpy County leaders and their respective department in the development of a successful internship program. This toolkit will provide information and templates designed to help create internships that meet the needs of Sarpy County and the Interns.

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. Internship circumstances vary widely. Common characteristics include:

- ✓ Duration of 12 weeks
- ✓ Part-time or full-time commitments
- ✓ Paid or unpaid opportunities
- ✓ Connection to an education program with academic credit, or not connected to earning credit

Types of internship programs

Internship: A one-time curriculum-related work assignment, which may be paid or unpaid depending on the requirement of the student for the position. Most internships offer academic credit.

Summer Employment: Paid work experience, however, this type of position may or may not be directed related to the student's curriculum and many or may not be integrated into the academic program.

Importance of internship programs

Benefits for Sarpy County from an internship program

- ✓ An inexpensive recruiting tool and an opportunity to train future employees.
- ✓ The opportunity to evaluate prospective employees while we are working for the organization can reduce significant costs in finding new talent;
- ✓ Interns bring current technology and ideas from the classroom to the workplace and therefore increase Sarpy County's intellectual capital;
- ✓ Interns can be another source for the recruitment of diverse employees into our workforce;
- ✓ An internship program can supply an easily accessible source of highly motivated pre-professionals;
- ✓ Interns provide an opportunity for mid-level staff to manage.

Developing an Internship Program

Five requirements of the Intern Sarpy Program

Requirement 1: Set goals for the intern in your respective department

- ✓ Look at current business activities and consider what ongoing work your department would like to expand or projects your department would like to initiate or complete.
- ✓ Consider projects that are beneficial to your department and County-wide that will provide challenging learning experiences for students.
- ✓ Examine your department's recruiting needs (i.e. employees retiring or on extended leave or any expected growth within your department).

Who will supervise and mentor the intern?

- ✓ A supervisor should be selected because he/she likes to teach or train and has the resources to do it. The supervisor will help the intern keep their project on time and on budget.
- ✓ The mentor may be a department head, project leader, long-term employee or acting supervisor who is knowledgeable on the project where the intern will work and can provide some orientation and wisdom to the student.

Who will pay the intern?

- ✓ Internship opportunities can be paid or unpaid. Being that Sarpy County is a public employer, we do not have to pay interns, however, according to FLSA, the Intern must be clear that they are not getting compensated are doing the work on a purely volunteer basis.
- ✓ If the department has the funds available in their respective budget, the department can pay the Intern.
- ✓ *If the County develops a fund for Interns, then the respective department head must submit an Intern Plan to the Internship Committee for consideration <Discuss option with Administration.>*

Requirement 2: Write a plan for the internship opportunity

- ✓ Identify goals, timelines, workspace and a general description of the project, which will become your work plan, so that everyone understands the purpose and expectation involved. There is a form that will help the manager create this work plan, along with sample job descriptions.

- ✓ After the work place has been established, create a job description for the position.

Can the hiring manager involve the intern in experiences beyond the actual work of the internship?

- ✓ Yes, this could include training programs, social events, and opportunities to network with key leadership. Best practices for social events include encouraging interns to network among themselves to share their experiences.

Requirement 3: Recruit a qualified intern

- ✓ Begin search 3-4 months before you expect a student to start working. Example – May start date, post in January-February time frame.
- ✓ Choose an Intern just as carefully as you choose permanent employees. On average, up to 45% of students are offered full-time employment upon graduation from college. Once you have determined your top candidates, arrange an interview in a timely manner (best practice is 3-5 days).
- ✓ Extend an offer to the intern of your choice. You will find examples of offer letters and memo of understanding in the attachment section. Notify candidates who are interviewed, but not chosen for the position. Human Resources will handle the notification part of the process.

Requirement 4: Manage the intern

- ✓ Getting started on the right foot is important. This will lay a good foundation for the intern's experience. Using the work plan, you have developed for the internship opportunity, set up and orientation for your new intern.
- ✓ Give your intern the resources he or she needs to do the job. A proper workstation, telephone with voicemail, computer and email account are vital to your interns' success. Point out the supply room, break area(s) and introduce to appropriate personnel.
- ✓ Monitor your intern's progress. Make sure you are aware of what is happening with their daily tasks.
- ✓ Keep in mind this could be a first work experience for this person. 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. This will help establish a solid work ethic for the intern.
- ✓ Evaluate the intern's progress periodically and give feedback. Evaluations are important for the success of your intern's experience. Evaluation processes differ and yours might be a forms written review given at the halfway point and at the end of the program, or it may be delivered over an occasional lunch with the intern.
- ✓ Educational institutions may require onsite visits or conference calls during the internship to facilitate the evaluation process for grading purposes. The student intern should be able to share with you what is expected and a representative from the might be in contact if this is a requirement for credit.

Requirement 5: Conduct exit interview and follow-up

- ✓ Proving the value of the internship program will require hard evidence that Sarpy County is getting a return on its investment.
- ✓ Use the evaluation forms. Both intern and the County need to evaluate each other.
- ✓ Conduct an exit interview to determine if interns are leaving the County having had a good experience. This provides valuable feedback to upper management for future program planning.
- ✓ In addition to qualitative measures, a number of quantitative measures can be developed over time. Such as measures that may include the number of interns that become full-time employees, the number of request for interns in the County and growing number of qualified intern applicants.
- ✓ In order to successfully measure the County's program outcome, the department should return the stated program goals and address those outcomes.

Legal Issues – Do you have to pay interns?

- ✓ The U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), severely restricts an employer's ability to use unpaid interns. It doesn't limit an employer's ability to hire paid interns.
- ✓ Courts have used the "primary beneficiary test" to determine whether an intern or student is, in fact, an employee under FLSA. In short, this test allows courts to examine the "economic reality" of the intern/employer relationship to determine which party is the "primary beneficiary" of the relationship. Courts have identified the following seven factors as part of the test:
 - The extent to which the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation. Any promise of compensation, express or implied, suggests that the intern is an employee and vice versa.
 - The extent to which the internship provides training that would be similar to that which would be given in an educational environment, including the clinical and other hands-on training provided by educational institutions.
 - The extent to which the internship is tied to the intern's academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar.
 - The extent to which the internship's duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning.
 - The extent to which the intern's work complements, rather than displaces, the work of paid employees while providing significant educational benefits to the intern.
 - The extent to which the intern and the employer understand that the internship is conducted without entitlement to a paid job and the conclusion of the internship.
 - Worker's Compensation insurance coverage with Sarpy County does not cover interns or volunteers, as they are not bona fide employees.
- ✓ The County 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; confidentiality; and 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 sense to document such a discussion with a written agreement. This should be made in consultation with the educational institution.

- ✓ If an intern is harassed at the County, and the manager doesn't do anything about it, the County has opened itself up to the risk of lawsuits. Take time to advise your intern(s) of appropriate workplace behavior, the organization's harassment policy and the complaint procedure.

International Students

The most common visa types Sarpy County could see are the F-1 and J-1.

- ✓ An F-1 is granted to a person coming to the United States to attend a college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school or other academic institution or language program training by the U.S. Attorney General for study by foreign student.
- ✓ F-1 students may not work off campus during the first academic year, but may accept on-campus employment subject to certain conditions and restrictions. After the first academic year, F-1 students may engage in three types of off-campus employment:
 - Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Is temporary employment authorization for F-1 visa non-immigrant foreign students in the United States while enrolled in a college-level degree program.
 - Optional Practical Training (OPT). Undergraduate and graduate students with F-1 status who have completed or have been pursuing their degrees for more than three months are permitted by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to work for one year on a student visa
 - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training Extension (OPT). To be eligible to employ a STEM OPT student, an employer must have a bona fide employer-employee relationship with the student. The employer must attest to this fact by signing the Form I-983, *Training Plan for STEM OPT Students*. In order to establish a bona fide relationship, the employer may not be the student's "employer" in name only, nor may the student work for the employer on a "volunteer" basis. Moreover, the employer that signs the Form I-983 must be the same entity that provides the practical training experience to the student.
- ✓ J-1 is a non-immigrant visa issued to individuals who would to visit the U.S. as part of a work or travel program or a short-term international student scholar.
- ✓ Employment off-campus must be related to the student's area of study and must be authorized prior to starting any work by the designated school official (the person authorized to maintain the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and USCIS.

- ✓ If your candidate is an international student, please remember Sarpy County doesn't sponsor employees. Employees on an F-1 and J-1 visa do not require sponsorships. Please ensure Human Resources is aware of any visa situations.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What level of compensation is typical for an internship?

A: In planning to allocate resources for Sarpy's internship program, compensation may be a consideration. An hourly wage can vary depending upon experience; typically the hourly wage for an intern at Sarpy County is \$12.00 per hour. If you are unable to budget an hourly wage, consider offering a student a non-paid internship. Sarpy can do this being that we are a government entity. Just ensure that the guidelines under FLSA are followed as previously discussed.

Q: Does Sarpy County offer benefits to the intern?

A: No, the intern is considered a seasonal/temporary employee and therefore they do not qualify to benefits.

Q: Do interns work 40 hour work weeks? Do they typically work five days a week?

A: Internships are flexible; students often plan their internship schedules around their class schedules on campus. A part-time internship can involve anywhere between 10-30 hours per week. Once you identify an intern candidate you will need to discuss their availability and agree to a schedule that will work for both parties. During school breaks, such as summer, students may be able to work up to 40 hours per week.

Q: When do internships typically begin? How long do they last?

A: Internships usually follow the starting and ending dates of the academic semester. They take place during summer breaks (typically May-August), during the fall (September-December) or the spring (January – April). An internship is generally between three to nine months and can begin, summer, fall or spring.

Q: When should a hiring manager start looking for an intern if they want them to start work in the summer?

A: Typically internship descriptions are posted at least two-months prior to the proposed start date to allow for a one-month window to candidates to submit applications.

Q: How does a student obtain academic credit for internship experience?

A: Credit requirements for internships vary by school. It is the student's responsibility to manage this.

Q: What if the intern doesn't work out? Are there rules for terminating interns the same way as there are for full or part-time positions?

A: In most cases, interns are treated as employees and therefore the same laws apply. It is advised that you consult Human Resources for further information and specific Department of Labor requirements.

