

IT Student Internship 2024 Final Report

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Purpose

From September to December 2024, SDCOE's Integrated Technology Services (ITS) held the inaugural cohort of the SDCOE IT Student Internship Program. This report provides a brief overview of the program, summarizes stakeholder feedback, and outlines future actions.

Executive Summary

In September 2024, ITS launched the SDCOE IT Student Internship Program, providing Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS) students with hands-on experience in IT. Over nine weeks, student interns explored enterprise IT operations, developed technical skills, and investigated potential job opportunities. The inaugural cohort consisted of two interns, Mariah and Faith, whose experiences and feedback played a crucial role in refining the program for future participants.

Feedback from both interns and ITS staff highlighted the program's success in fostering enthusiasm for IT careers and strengthening the connection between ITS and JCCS.

"This was an INCREDIBLE program. I heard leaders mention this is the first time they have seen clarity about how they fit into the North Star because of the direct connection with the internship program. I see so much tremendous value for the interns, for ITS staff, and for our collective partnership with JCCS. I am so excited to be a part of helping this program grow for many years to come!"

-Team Member, Integrated Technology Services



Moving forward, the next cohort will benefit from an expanded schedule, enhanced orientation, and the integration of CompTIA Tech+ certification. Additionally, plans are underway for a second phase of the program, launching in July 2025, which will focus on cybersecurity, aligning with the growing demand for cybersecurity professionals. This initiative continues to evolve, ensuring greater impact for students, staff, and the broader San Diego community.

Program Overview

Our “Why”

The SDCOE IT Student Internship Program introduces JCCS students to IT careers, helping them build skills, gain work experience, and explore future job opportunities. Over nine weeks, interns gain hands-on experience by working up to 16 hours per week at \$17/hour in various ITS departments. They explore the guiding question, 'What does an IT team do in a large company, and how might you see yourself being part of that team?' and conclude the program by presenting their learnings.

Looking ahead, the program will offer an optional second nine-week session focused on cybersecurity, aligning with the National Cyber Workforce and Education Strategy (NCWES) to expand America's cybersecurity talent. With millions of cybersecurity jobs unfilled worldwide, this extension would provide students with exposure to a growing and critical field they might not have otherwise considered.

SDCOE ITS is proud to support our JCCS schools and our organization's North Star goal.

Cohort 1: Our First Group of Interns

Mariah and Faith were the first two students to join the IT Internship Program, marking the beginning of an initiative designed to introduce students to various aspects of IT services. Hired as student workers, they spent October through December 2024 rotating through multiple departments within ITS, gaining firsthand experience in different areas of technology support and administration. Their journey began with Technology Support Services, where they learned the fundamentals of operating a help desk and assisting users with technical issues. From there, they transitioned into Student Data Systems, where they explored the administrative functions of the county's student information system, gaining insight into how technology supports student records and educational data. The rotation continued with Software Application Services, Network Services, Infrastructure & Cloud Services, the Enterprise Project Management Office, and concluded at the Security Operations Center, giving them a comprehensive view of IT operations within the organization.

Throughout the program, Mariah and Faith provided ongoing feedback to help refine and improve the internship experience for future students. Their insights were instrumental in shaping the structure and support mechanisms of the program. Unfortunately, Faith had to exit the program early due to a family emergency, but she had already made a meaningful impact during her time in the rotation. Mariah, seeing the program through to completion, culminated her experience by delivering a final presentation to a full room of ITS & JCCS staff, showcasing what she had learned and reflecting on her journey. Her presentation not only demonstrated the knowledge she gained but also highlighted the value of hands-on exposure to different IT fields. Their participation set a strong foundation for future iterations of the program, paving the way for more students to explore careers in IT through real-world experience.

Mariah's final presentation can be found [here](#).



A Unified SDCOE Effort

Over seventy people continue to contribute to this program, including staff from Integrated Technology Services, Juvenile Court and Community Schools, Human Resources, Business Services, and Career Technical Education.

Survey Results for Cohort 1

ITS and JCCS staff who participated in Cohort 1 received a survey. The responses revealed several key themes:

Mariah and Faith were passionate, enthusiastic, and eager to learn.

"I loved seeing the interns find areas of IT that they were passionate about possibly pursuing as a career."

"Faith and Mariah were dedicated and eager to learn."

"A highlight of the program was watching the interns grow from having little to no knowledge to successfully completing real-world tasks. It was incredibly rewarding to see their progress and how they gained confidence in their abilities over time."

"Our intern was fantastic and eager to learn, adaptable, and great to work with."

"A highlight for me was the enthusiasm of Mariah when she was talking about an area she really enjoyed."

Working with interns deepened our connection to JCCS and unified staff.

"What really stood out to me is how unifying this was for our SDCOE staff... We rallied together and felt a sense of pride and ownership of our work, and also had a deeper connection to JCCS."

"Having the opportunity to work with a student was amazing since many of us typically are several steps removed from our students."

"I was impressed with the efforts and support of the ITS teams. Everyone showed care, love, and professionalism. The curriculum each team created for the intern was valuable."



Working with interns notably impacted employee workloads.

"To improve the program, have them shadow us instead of having employees train them. This will assist in bringing a sense of belonging for employees as they will feel their workloads and concerns are considered and heard."

"Going forward, I would be concerned about the logistics (and time commitments for staff) of having more than one or two interns at a time."

Interns need stronger foundational IT knowledge before joining ITS departments.

"I believe the program could benefit from pre-program training materials to help interns build a foundational understanding before starting hands-on tasks."

"An intern would already have an interest in IT and have some basic training so we could assign basic tasks. Having interns shouldn't cause more work."

"Choose students who already have a solid understanding of IT. Interns are meant to support the team and ease workloads, not create additional challenges."

The full survey data can be found [here](#).

Lessons Learned from Cohort 1

Each department held Lessons Learned meetings at the end of the week. The teams identified several key lessons throughout the program:

1. Establishing norms of how we will work together each week is important. Example norms include “Be brave – ask questions”, “Use of cellphone limited, unless needed”, and “Have fun!”
2. Interns have very little to no experience with computers or IT. We could significantly improve the program by providing this knowledge to interns before they begin work with each department.
3. Hands-on experiences, such as taking apart a laptop, setting up a server, and executing terminal commands, connected much more strongly with the interns.
4. Many ITS staff do not have experience working with very young employees.

The full lessons learned data can be found [here](#).

Next Steps

The second group of students will join ITS starting on February 18, 2025. They will follow the same core structure as Cohort 1, with the following improvements:

- Interns will spend 22 hours per week with each department – increased from 16 hours in Cohort 1
- Orientation will be expanded to provide the interns with a solid understanding of professionalism in the workplace
- ITS has partnered with CompTIA to integrate the Tech+ certification into the program, which will provide interns with foundational IT knowledge
- ITS will work with JCCS to develop and refine the way in which we work with young employees

As Cohort 2 participates in *Part 1: “Intro to Enterprise IT”*, we will begin planning *Part 2: “Deep Dive into Cybersecurity”*. The expected launch date of Part 2 is July 7, 2025.

