Colby·Sawyer College

HARRINGTON CENTER FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Internship Site Supervisor Handbook

Hosting an internship can be a wonderful experience for all involved. A successful internship provides students with an unparalleled opportunity to apply their classroom learning to the workplace. Internships also provide host organizations with high-achieving workers who bring a fresh perspective and ideas. In order for an internship to be successful, both the site supervisor and the intern must understand how an internship differs from a job, and both must commit to working together to make the most of the opportunity.

Benefits of Internships to:

Employers

- Gain enthusiastic and motivated workers
- Assistance with special projects
- A fresh perspective in ongoing projects
- Develop supervisory skills of staff
- Access to students with special skills and knowledge
- Opportunity to train new professionals in your field
- Develop your own pool of potential employees

Students

- An opportunity to "test-drive" a career choice
- Develop specific skills and knowledge related to a career
- Develop professional contacts
- Learn directly from experienced professionals
- Gain experience in a real-world situation, including interviewing, working with others, communication skills, and culture of various work environments

What Kind of Students Go to Colby-Sawyer?

Colby-Sawyer College currently enrolls approximately 1400 students from 22 states and 29 other countries. Colby-Sawyer is accredited by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC), the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE), the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), the New Hampshire Board of Nursing and the State of New Hampshire Board of Education.

As a liberal arts college, Colby-Sawyer is committed to the idea of educating the whole person. We offer more than 20 areas of study, and students have the opportunity to create a self-designed major or complete a double major. While students choose to major in everything from graphic design to athletic training, all complete the basic liberal arts requirements that help students develop their writing, communication, and analytical skills.

In addition to the overall benefits of a liberal arts education, Colby-Sawyer College students participate in rigorous study in areas including the sciences, the humanities, and the arts. The small faculty to student ratio allows students much more hands-on experience than students from larger universities. For example, by the time they graduate, 98% of Colby-Sawyer students will have completed some form of professional preparation experience, including internships, clinical internships, student teaching, and service-learning.

Overall, Colby-Sawyer College students are bright, curious, and interested in pursuing challenges. Graduates of Colby-Sawyer are successful leaders in business, science, social service, the arts, and virtually any field one can imagine. Internships are one way that students begin the path to success while making a meaningful contribution to your organization.

What's the Difference between an Internship and a Job?

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." The key phrases in this definition are "carefully monitored," "intentional learning goals," and "reflects actively."

In a typical entry-level job, an employee receives training to perform the tasks necessary for the position, and then the employee is expected to carry out the duties as assigned, preferably with little supervision. In an internship, however, interns bring "intentional learning goals" that support their academic and career interests. In addition to the work product provided to the internship site, interns will come with specific goals, often in the form of a learning agreement or contract. In most cases, as a site supervisor you will be asked to assist the intern and faculty sponsor in developing these goals. This ensures that the goals are reasonable and also indicates your commitment to helping the intern achieve these goals during the internship. Interns are asked to reflect actively on their experience. This means that interns will often have more questions than a typical employee before, during, and after the internship. This reflection helps make the internship more meaningful, while connecting the on-site experience to the student's academic training.

Before the Internship

If you are considering sponsoring an internship, it is helpful for you to first ask yourself a series of questions.

1. Can I provide a meaningful experience that helps students explore career choices?

Of course, routine work is a part of everyone's job, and internships are no exception to this rule. Ask yourself whether you have distinct goals, objectives, or projects for an intern. Will they be part of a team that is developing a new marketing campaign? Will they be conducting research on a product to determine quality control? Will they be allowed to participate in staff meetings?

With the increased popularity of internships and a competitive job market comes a stretch in the definition of a true internship. In an effort to attract potential employees, some employers have fallen into the trap of labeling entry-level jobs as internships. For example, they may need someone to complete routine office tasks, but by calling it an internship, they hope to attract bright young students who may later be interested in joining the company or organization in a different capacity. This approach usually backfires, however, because students who expect to be challenged and learn new tasks in an internship become unhappy when they discover that the position is not as advertised. This makes it even less likely that they will consider a full-time position later. Even worse, the student may share their experience with others, resulting in a bad reputation for the employer.

2. How will the intern be compensated?

Compensation comes in many forms. In some cases, interns are paid at or near the prevailing wage for an entry-level professional. Compensation at this rate helps attract students and ensures that the internship site can pick the "cream of the crop." It also helps students to focus on the internship because they do not have to work a second job at the same time. In other cases, interns are paid a "training wage" that is at or above minimum wage. Some employers offer a stipend, a set amount of money that is awarded without regard to the number of hours completed in an internship. Before offering a stipend, however, employers should check with state regulations concerning stipends to ensure that all appropriate regulations are being followed.

Non-profit groups and small companies often cannot afford to pay an intern anything, and so compensation in other forms should be considered. For example, an arts agency may provide the intern with free tickets and backstage passes to performances. A social service agency may pay the registration and other expenses to send an intern to a professional conference. Students who undertake a non-paid internship may need more flexibility in their hours so that they can also work at a paid job. All Colby-Sawyer College interns, regardless of the pay status of their internships, receive credit and/or transcript recognition for their internships. Most Colby-Sawyer majors require at least one internship and other majors highly recommend that students complete an internship prior to graduation.
For many students, the most important compensation is the opportunity to learn real skills and contribute to the mission of the internship site. However, states have different regulations related to non-paid internships and compensation. If you have questions about the laws in your state, please check with appropriate authorities.

3. Who will supervise the intern?
An intern must have a designated site-supervisor who is responsible for providing orientation, supervision, and opportunities for reflection for the student. This should be someone who will be available to the student on a regular basis, and possesses expertise in the area in which the intern will work. Even if the intern will rotate through various departments in order to gain broad-based experience, there still should be a single overall supervisor who oversees the internship as a whole.

When choosing a site supervisor, it is important to choose someone who:

- ☑ Is interested in working with college students
- ☑ Has the time to invest in the internship, especially during the first few weeks
- ☑ Has qualities such as leadership, strong communication, and patience

Since an internship is defined as a learning experience, proper supervision of the intern is essential. The supervisor serves as a teacher, mentor, critic, and boss. Ongoing supervision of the student intern is key to the success of the internship. This is especially true for students who do not have extensive work experience. The work environment is unlike the classroom in many ways. For example, in an academic environment students are used to having clear objectives and receiving frequent feedback regarding their progress (e.g., grades). Also, students are expected to challenge their "supervisors" (professors) and focus on new ways of thinking rather than following established protocols. Student behaviors that are often rewarded in the classroom can sometimes cause difficulties in the workplace. Acknowledging and identifying the different expectations between the workplace and school can help interns make a successful transition to the world of work.

An effective method of intern supervision is to have a set time-- weekly is recommended -- to meet with the intern to review progress on projects, touch base, and provide feedback. Some supervisors do this over lunch; others choose a more formal setting, depending on the culture of your organization and time constraints.

TRAINING

Training is as important as supervision. Establish a training program that will give the intern a clear understanding of what is expected, and include information about the duties that will be supervised and evaluated. Refer to the learning contract or agreement that was signed at the beginning of the internship.

Orientation

Establish written goals and objectives and clarify these goals and objectives before the intern begins working. Some interns need more guidance than others, and many factors must be taken into consideration. Consider the intern's cultural background, disabilities, learning style, and previous experience. Evaluate his or her level of maturity and confidence. Is the intern a critical thinker or a creative problem-solver?

Orientation can be a formal or informal process depending on the number of interns and needs of the employer. However, regardless of the structure, there are important elements that should be included in any orientation program for interns. Plan to include the following in your initial training:

Information about the organization – Offer interns your company or organization's literature to review and any other documents that are important for them to understand the big picture. If available, include an organizational chart that explains various roles and responsibilities of employees.

Structure – Interns might not be familiar with formal workplace procedures (e.g., attendance policies, break times, days off). Generate a written document that clarifies relevant policies and procedures and submit this to interns on their first day with your organization.

Introductions – Take time in the beginning of the internship to introduce the intern to key people in the organization. Allow more time for conversation with those employees who are likely to interact with the intern on a regular basis. Some interns, based on personality or culture, may be reluctant to seek out co-workers on their own. By making a special effort to encourage those contacts early on, interns will feel more comfortable asking for advice or support later.

Ongoing Training

Interns, as students, appreciate any opportunity to learn new skills or increase their knowledge. Developing a plan for training throughout the internship will keep students interested in the position and ready to tackle new challenges. Ongoing training may include the following:

Skill Development – There may be a need for training in specific skills such as computer programs, office equipment, or other tasks directly related to the job. Even very bright students with great potential will struggle if they are not instructed in the specifics related to successful completion of duties.

Shadowing – Allow interns to participate in activities and meetings. Interns may have leadership potential but not understand the culture of your organization. They will rely on their supervisor to educate them.

Questions – Interns might not know when to speak or how or what to ask. Assist them in actively learning by explaining and clarifying everything. Suggest and encourage questions at appropriate times.

Professional conferences or association meetings – If possible, see if you can offer the opportunity to attend a training or networking event. It helps interns to get a feel for the overall mission of your organization, and at the same time makes them feel that they are valued.

Mentoring

A mentor is a counselor, guide, tutor, or coach. Valuable internship experiences not only include effective supervision, but also, a large component of mentoring. Most interns seek out internships in order to develop their own career goals. Mentors help guide students though their experience. This may mean allowing or encouraging the student to participate in events that may not normally be open to entry-level professionals, such as certain staff meetings, client consultations, or other work-related events. Even though these events may not be directly tied to the intern's specific job duties, they will help provide a broad overview of your business or organization. A mentoring relationship is valuable for both the intern and the professional. The intern has the opportunity to reflect on his or her experience in a supportive, educational atmosphere. The mentor can pass on a wealth of experience and knowledge, and benefits from a fresh perspective and new ways of thinking.

EVALUATION

Evaluation is important to an intern's development and is an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses. It is helpful if supervisors evaluate throughout the entire internship, not just at the end. The evaluation should be structured as a learning experience and an opportunity for bilateral feedback. Regularly scheduled evaluations help avoid common problems with internships, including miscommunication, misunderstanding of job roles, and lack of specific goals and objectives. You may find it helpful to schedule a preliminary evaluation very early in the internship (in the second or third week). This will help you understand whether the intern's orientation and training was sufficient, or if there are specific areas in which the intern has questions or needs further training.

Criteria to consider when evaluating an intern are:

- Progress towards or accomplishment of learning objectives as stated in the learning agreement
- Skill development or job knowledge gained over the course of the internship
- Overall contribution to the mission of the organization
- Dependability, punctuality, attendance
- Relations with others, overall attitude
- Potential in the field

The student will also evaluate the internship experience, which is important in determining the value of the work experience for future interns. Categories might include:

- Was there educational value or merit in the assignment?
- Did the position live up to its initial description?
- Was the supervisor receptive to your ideas?
- Does the experience relate to your major or career goals?
- Did you receive a proper job orientation?
- Was the supervisor willing and/or capable of answering questions?
- Did you develop work habits?

ENDING THE INTERNSHIP

An internship should have a clearly stated end date that is identified before the internship begins. Completing a formal evaluation process such as the one described above can help both the site supervisor and the intern to put closure on the experience. You also may want to have some form of acknowledgment such as a lunch with co-workers in the final week of the internship. Since co-workers often have extensive

contact with interns, this type of event can be a positive way to recognize the contribution of other employees as well as the intern.

If you are considering hiring the intern for a full-time or part-time position, it is important to make this transition. It is not fair to the intern or co-workers to simply "extend the internship." Make the offer as you would any employee, complete with a title change and a job description. As the person is now considered an employee with some degree of experience and more responsibility, it is normal practice to offer a pay raise when someone makes the leap from intern to employee.

CHECKLIST FOR INTERNSHIP SITE SUPERVISORS

_____ Develop internship position description
_____ Post advertisement, send to Colby-Sawyer College Career Development Center
_____ Interview candidates/hire intern
_____ Meet with intern and faculty/staff advisor to establish Learning Agreement
_____ Provide/supervise training of intern
_____ Establish and conduct regularly scheduled supervision meetings
_____ Provide a mid-term and end of internship evaluation, including completing evaluation forms

ASSISTANCE FROM THE COLBY-SAWYER COLLEGE HARRINGTON CENTER FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The Harrington Center for Experiential Learning is available to help internship site supervisors before, during, and after internships. Before an internship, the Internship Coordinator can help employers determine whether the internship is likely to be a good fit for Colby-Sawyer students (e.g., whether students are likely to have the training and interest necessary to be successful in your organization). We can also publicize the internship in many ways, including use of the internet, e-mail to targeted majors, posters, and other advertising. Employers can take advantage of our on-campus recruiting services, including interviewing on campus and the opportunity to provide information sessions to interested students.

When you decide to hire a Colby-Sawyer student as an intern, the Internship Coordinator and Faculty Sponsor are available to help in developing learning objectives and learning agreements. In the rare instance that there is a problem during an internship, we can help to mediate any conflict. Colby-Sawyer College Faculty Sponsors will act as the supervisor from the Colby-Sawyer perspective. This may include scheduled site visits or phone calls to check in on the internship and offer any assistance as needed.

We look forward to working with you regarding internships. A successful internship provides positive outcomes for everyone involved. Should you have any questions regarding internships, please do not hesitate to contact the Internship Coordinator at the Colby-Sawyer College Harrington Center for Experiential Learning.