



Corporate Work Study Program

DOWNTIME GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS

As part of our efforts to support both students and supervisors, we have assembled the following list of downtime ideas and best practices. Downtime is a natural feature of every work experience and provides students with the opportunity to learn crucial skills in taking initiative, seeking out new challenges, and constructively managing their time independently. We encourage supervisors to clearly communicate to their student(s) all of their own expectations regarding downtime so that they can learn how to better manage downtime on their own throughout the day.

DESIGNATED DOWNTIME PROJECTS

Establish designated “go-to” downtime tasks for your students. If they have a list of tasks to tackle when they encounter downtime, this helps make expectations clear, so students can take charge of their own time and contributions when work is slow. Any activity in any category of this guide can be designated as a go-to downtime task!

- **Supplies.** Stocking supplies around the office, copy rooms, or breaks rooms; Taking inventory.
- **Tidying.** Cleaning, organizing, or sanitizing common areas, break rooms, meeting rooms.
- **Office “spirit.”** Decorate the office or shared spaces for holidays or birthdays. Curating bulletin boards or other shared spaces; task your students with updating community bulletin boards on topics such as Birthdays, Holidays, Wellness Tips, Jokes & Puns, Workplace Productivity Tips, History of the Company, Employee Showcases, etc.
- **Staff appreciation.** Employee appreciation projects such as letters or other small handmade tokens of appreciation to deliver around the office/mailroom.
- **Communication practice.** Put students in charge of a weekly or monthly internal staff memo (Example: “From the Desk of The San Miguel Student Associates.”) Students can write team member appreciation articles, updates on their school activities, etc.
- **Ongoing data entry or backlogged projects.** If your office is in the process of digitizing files, encourage student associates to pick up where someone left off!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our students crave growth and learning, and are often more successful when there is some degree of variety and challenge at work. The following activities may help increase your student employees' skills and contributions to your office.

- **Resume/CV.** Have your students research and create a resume, or even get practice writing a cover letter. You could have the students “apply” for a current or past job listing from within your organization.
- **LinkedIn.** Ask students to create a professional LinkedIn account. Have students research and write a report on the uses and importance of professional networking. Ask students to write a job description for their own position to assess their own understanding of their duties and contributions, and to open up conversations with your student about her or his professional development.
- **Company/Industry Research.** Have your student read articles about your company, your stakeholders, or your clients, or to learn about any relevant partners or competitors, to help students gain greater exposure to and understanding of your organization. Ask students to draw connections between their job and the company as a whole, and help students see how the broader missions and structures of the whole organization are supported by the tasks they do each day. Or ask your student to spend time on your company website and write down any tips or changes they would suggest to make your company's website and/or social media presence more user-, customer-, or youth-friendly. Have students assist with your organization's social media, or ask them to write mock blog posts to gain marketing and communications practice.
- **Book Club.** Many of our supervisors have had great success tasking students with reading books at work that are industry related, or have to do with personal and professional growth. Students might read one or two chapters each workday, or more or less depending on the time available. Past books used include: *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, *StrengthsFinder 2.0* (after taking the test), *Quiet: The Power of Introverts*, *Orange Frog*, and *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Ask your students to write reports or mock blog posts after each chapter/book to summarize what they've learned, and how it applies to their work-study position, your office, and/or your organization at large. You might even require students to present their findings at a weekly staff meeting for practice speaking in front of a group. Students at one partner organization even read the same book as one of their adult co-workers, and meet once a month for lunch to discuss together.
- **Courses.** Sign your students up for Business and Professional Development courses using free, online platforms such as Coursera, edX, or Udemy.
- **Self-Designed Projects.** For students who already demonstrate good initiative, creativity, and/or critical thinking skills, ask them to identify a need or problem in your office, organization, or industry, and ask students to research, design, and propose their own project or solution accordingly.

TECHNICAL SKILLS PRACTICE

There is always something new to learn when it comes to computers and the digital universe. Supervisors are welcome and encouraged to use downtime as an opportunity to help your students practice and refine their computer skills, whether specifically for work in your office or for beyond.

- **iCEV.** All San Miguel High School students have access to iCEV, an online professional development platform that provides extra training to students tailored to the projects that they are working on at their workplace. There are hundreds of courses that can be assigned to the student based on their workplace needs, ranging from Excel and PowerPoint lessons to professional skills. Students are welcome to use any existing learning software that your organization uses as well.
- **Typing.** Students can improve their typing skills online using websites such as FreeTypingGame.net.
- **Code Academy.** Students can learn to code for free at codeacademy.com or code.org.

EXPANDING STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Send your student where the work is! Many supervisors have found success rotating students through different departments or duties. This could be over the course of a morning, a day, a few days, or even several week chunks. Students can gain valuable exposure to different departments and skills, while broadening their connections with more people around your office.

- **Share with other teams/departments.** Share or “sign out” your students to different departments or teams for an hour, an afternoon, a day, or several days. Some companies do this during weekly department meetings, or through google docs for departments to post projects and dates/times they would appreciate the extra help. Other supervisors report success with sending out quarterly email blasts including student pictures to the whole company as a reminder that your students exist and are ready and able to assist.
- **Scribe.** Bring students into meetings to take notes or record meeting minutes. Ask students to write the meeting recap afterwards, or to write a report on what they learned.
- **Interviews and shadowing.** Students should gain a broader understanding of all the pieces, parts, and roles in your organization by setting them up to interview various people within your organization. Have students research who they will be meeting with ahead of time, and even create their own list of interview questions to use.
- **Off-site visits.** Get your students out of the building! Invite them to join you and/or other team members on volunteer days, or to attend offsite meetings and nearby conferences, or on trips out to see clients or worksites associated with your organization.
- **Social Media Content Management.** Utilize your students’ intimate knowledge of the latest in Social Media by allowing them to create content for your company’s social media pages.

DOWNTIME GUIDE AT-A-GLANCE

DESIGNATED DOWNTIME PROJECTS

- **Stock Supplies.**
- **Tidying.**
- **Decorate office shared space/bulletin boards.**
- **Staff appreciation.**
- **Internal communications.**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Create Resume/CV.**
- **LinkedIn.**
- **Company/Industry Research.**
- **Book Club.**
- **Professional Development Courses.**
- **Self-Designed Projects.**

TECHNICAL SKILLS PRACTICE

- **iCEV learning software.**
- **Typing practice.** FreeTypingGame.net
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