INTERNSHIP IN A BOX

AN EMPLOYER’S GUIDE TO FINDING, HIRING, AND KEEPING GREAT INTERNS

THE CHAMBER of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia
campusphilly
Welcome to Campus Philly’s Internship In A Box.

This guide is designed for employers who want to revamp their internship program or build one from scratch. We know the task can seem daunting. But we present clear, actionable steps to help you operate a successful internship program — one that adds value to your organization, helps build your talent pipeline, and improves your organization’s brand as an employer of choice.

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Photos by Olivia Bresky, Brian Grech, and Ardis Ladd for Campus Philly.

Campus Philly is a regional nonprofit with the mission to fuel the regional economy by encouraging college students to study, explore, live, and work in the Greater Philadelphia region.

2 Penn Center, Suite 411, Philadelphia, PA 19102 | CampusPhilly.org | 215.988.1707

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DEFINING AN INTERNSHIP

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) defines an internship as:

A form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting.¹

In other words, internships are professional experiences for college students, leveraging their knowledge and expertise and extending their skill set.

GREATER PHILADELPHIA’S TALENT EDGE

The battle for young talent has increased and employers in Greater Philadelphia are poised to win. A CareerBuilder study found that “67% of employers reported they will be focusing their recruiting efforts on hiring recent graduates — the highest mark in 10 years.”²

Greater Philadelphia has nearly 100 degree-granting institutions, among the highest concentration in the United States. Campus Philly’s research show that 67% of college students want to stay in the region after graduation³ and a Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia survey of mid-career professionals shows that the vast majority are looking for opportunity in the region as well.⁴

Campus Philly provides easy access and an open door to universities and employers to find the best emerging talent in the region. And Philadelphia excels in internship placement. NACE reports that 61% of college students nationally have internship experience. For Greater Philadelphia students, that figure is 79%. Even one-quarter of Greater Philadelphia freshmen report that they have had an internship.⁵

INTERNSHIP BENEFITS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

1. Build a pipeline of young, smart talent.
2. Develop ambassadors for your organization as they return to campus.
3. Get your products and work in front of young, connected consumers.
4. Test the potential of a new position.
5. Complete more projects.
6. Increase diversity in your organization.
7. Help employees develop management skills as intern supervisors.
8. Bring fresh eyes and ideas to long-standing challenges.
9. Get the latest industry information directly from the classroom.
10. Treat the internship as a three-month job interview for a full-time position.
GETTING INTERNAL BUY-IN

Employee support
- Recruit non-HR business leaders and team members to champion the development of an internship program. This makes it seem less of an “HR mandated” program.
- Poll employees to identify their level of interest in having an intern and ask them where they think an intern could be most useful and productive.
- Hold a focus group with employees to get a better understanding of their intern needs and what abilities/skills/knowledge an intern should possess to ensure a good ROI for the company.
- Create a form or application for requesting an intern. Ask employees to identify key attributes and qualifications, like specific majors, systems experience (MS Office, Excel, Salesforce), and/or prior work experience.

Senior leadership engagement
- Develop experiences for the intern that expose them to senior leaders in the company. Example could be a lunch and learn with the CEO. This provides an exciting educational opportunity for the intern but it’s also a great way for senior leadership to meet the intern, make a positive contribution to the internship program, and feel personally invested in its success.

GETTING TO WORK

The best internships start with good preparation
- Draft a job description that includes projects the intern will be working on.
- Identify the team and the supervisor the intern will be working with at the company.
- Clarify the hours, compensation, and evaluation the intern should expect.

GOALS & MEASUREMENT

Before you begin your internship description, consider what your organization’s goals are and how you will measure success.

Ask yourself
- Do I want to convert graduating interns to full-time employees?
- Do I want to create ambassadors for my organization as interns return to their campuses following the internship?
- Do I need assistance with a particular project?
- Is there an area of expertise interns could bring to my organization we do not currently have?
- Do I want to use the internship program as a focus group for our products and services?

THE CEO PERSPECTIVE

College internship programs are an important part of building our team. We want to ensure that investing time into our internship program will provide a positive return on investment, as well as a positive experience for the students. Interns are expected to perform at a high level, communicate effectively, learn quickly, work unsupervised when needed, take initiative, and ask good questions. Challenging projects are awarded to interns who perform well, and many of our interns have found themselves responsible for work comparable to that of junior level full-time employees. A successful internship program is a pipeline of hireable full-time candidates that rave about their training, mentorship, and challenges during their time at TherapyNotes.

BRAD PLINER
CEO, TherapyNotes
RESOURCES

Now that you know what you hope to gain, do you have what you need to be successful?

INTERNSHIP DESCRIPTIONS

Like all job listings, internship descriptions should clearly state the company background, culture, goals of the position, scope of work, hours, pay, and necessary skills. If you require specific coursework or majors that should be included as well.

Be sure to note any opportunities for interns to work on something innovative for your company. Those kinds of projects are a big plus and will make you a more appealing employer. Also list any other perks like free lunch on Fridays, access to the gym, or special discounts on summer housing.

Use these questions to help shape the internship and then use the goals you have identified to evaluate the internship’s success and impact.

- Conversions: How many interns were offered and accepted full-time positions after the internship?
- Ambassadors: Will interns recommend this internship to fellow students when they are back on campus?
- Projects: Did the projects identified at the beginning of the internship get completed?
- Expertise: Did my staff or organization adopt a new practice or skill as a result of the internship?
- Feedback: Was a new product or service improved as a result of having the college student perspective at work?

STAFF

Identify an Internship Coordinator

It is helpful to have an internship coordinator if your organization is recruiting many interns for various staff and departments. This person organizes the recruiting and onboarding process and matches interns to their projects, departments, and direct supervisors.

Identify a Mentor, Supervisor, and Project Team

A mentor acts as the “intern buddy.” They will be the intern’s go-to source for questions ranging from “can I ask someone from another team for advice on a project?” to “is there a good lunch spot nearby?” The mentor can be the supervisor, fellow team member, or simply a longtime employee.

The supervisor is the intern’s boss, assigning work and monitoring progress. Regular feedback and structured evaluations can help the intern understand their strengths and the areas that need improvement, promoting growth during the internship.

The project team is comprised of the people the intern will work with the most. The best intern experiences fully integrate interns into a team.

MONEY

The cost of an internship program can vary greatly. Some organizations offer housing assistance for interns, competitive salaries, and perks. Other organizations provide unpaid internships with limited or no company benefits. Campus Philly strongly advocates for paid internships for reasons that benefit both the intern and the employer.

Here are some typical paid internship structures:

- An hourly rate for interns ranges from $10 to $30 depending on the experience and skill of the intern. According to NACE’s 2018 Guide to Compensation for Interns and Co-ops, the average hourly wage for an intern is $18.73.

5 BENEFITS FROM PAYING YOUR INTERNS

1. Secure the best-qualified interns

The most skilled interns will have the highest number of internship options. Offering a paid internship signals to interns you are committed to their development and suggests you have the resources to create a valuable internship experience. Companies that offer paid internships are simply the most attractive options for candidates.

2. Increased performance

When you pay interns, they feel more committed. And the greater their commitment, the more productive they will be. Paying interns also makes requiring deliverables from your interns easier because the relationship of employer-intern is more clear.

3. Increased diversity

Offering a paid internship opens the pool of qualified applicants to choose from. Instead of selecting interns from only a segment of the population who can afford to work for free, you’re inviting qualified candidates who are not financially secure enough for unpaid employment. First generation, African American, and Hispanic students are all more likely to be paying their own way through school and need paid employment during college.

4. Higher worker retention rates

NACE discovered nearly 40% of employers report a higher five-year retention rate among employees they hired from their paid internships. An increased retention rate also saves your organization the money, time, and staff resources needed to identify and recruit other candidates outside of your organization.

5. Legal protection

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA) requires for-profit employers to pay employees for their work. Interns and students, however, may not be “employees” under the FLSA. Courts have used a “primary beneficiary” test to determine the status of an intern as entitled to pay or not. But if the employer is the “primary beneficiary” of the intern’s work, then he or she is an employee and needs to be paid. Nonprofit and government agencies are currently exempt from the Department of Labor’s internship criteria.
CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT
A student who is involved with extracurricular activities on campus likely has good organization and time management skills. They also demonstrate an ability to work in groups.

LEADERSHIP ROLES
Strong social skills, team-work, and self-confidence are all features of students who have leadership roles on their resume. Look for roles like orientation leader, resident assistant, or student tutor.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND COURSEWORK
Grade point average does not tell the entire story of any student, but if there is coursework they have completed that is relevant to your industry, it is good to know that students performed well in those courses. In addition to, or even instead of GPA, ask about performance and projects in courses that you think are applicable to the internship at hand.

ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION
Student-athletes typically have excellent time management skills and self-discipline. They often are used to working as a member of a team, handle setbacks while taking action to move forward, and follow direction to achieve a goal larger than themselves.

PRIOR WORK EXPERIENCE
Many potential student interns do not have professional experience. But you can look past a job title to see what skills are needed for that job and how they might translate to your internship position; retail experience indicates good customer service skills; camp counselors are good motivators and organizers.

THE HUMAN RESOURCES PERSPECTIVE
At Independence, we are changing and enhancing the way people experience health care in Philadelphia and throughout the U.S., so we are looking for well-rounded students who are eager to explore career opportunities at Independence. Since we are looking to convert our interns to full-time positions, we want to make sure that the student’s major aligns to the internship experience.

The factors we look for are:
• Prior work or internship experience
• Leadership in extracurricular activities and school involvement
• Participation in volunteer activities that demonstrate transferable skills
• Relevant coursework
• Solid GPA
• Strong interview
• Great attitude and willingness to learn and grow
• Knowledge about the company and a genuine interest in making a positive contribution

JOHN CLAYTON JR.
Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Independence Blue Cross
ONBOARDING

Your interns may be new to an office environment and they will certainly be new to your workplace culture. Your goal in onboarding interns is to introduce them to your organization, how it operates, and what culture drives it, so that interns can adapt, meet your expectations, and excel in their roles. Here are some steps for successfully onboarding interns:

BEFORE THEY START

- Be clear when hiring about the start and end date for the internship and include the number of hours/days worked each week.
- Is the student counting the internship for academic credit? If so, review their school’s requirements in providing credit and schedule time to fulfill their requests.
- Explain the company’s dress code.
- Identify a work space for the intern and consider the supplies they will need: computer, phone, company email address, and building ID card.
- Determine specific projects that your intern will be working on.
- Outline work expectations for your intern and create metrics for measuring intern success.

WHEN THEY ARRIVE

- Give your intern a tour of your organization and introduce them to other staff.
- Discuss operation procedures such as clocking-in, requesting time-off, absences, and overtime rules.
- Provide a one-sheet of key contacts (IT, HR, supervisor, important clients or partners, etc.).
- Provide an overview of the company culture. What are the unwritten rules of your organization? Are first names used for everyone or are some people Mr/Ms/Dr? Is it acceptable to bring a cell phone to a meeting to take notes or keep track of time?
- Review projects, expectations, and timeframes and how success for the intern will be measured.
RETENTION

A goal for many organizations is to convert their interns into full-time employees. Even those who can not plan for full-time hiring may want to bring a successful intern back during the semester or the following summer.

MAKING THE OFFER
Timing is important. Ideally you want to make a full-time or continued offer as a student concludes an internship and heads back to campus. Your organization’s ability to make the offer at this time will depend on the availability of positions you have and the timing of student’s graduation dates. By having an offer to the student as they return to campus they are able to leave on a high note and you have the chance to secure a new employee.

FOLLOWING UP
In the space between when an offer is accepted and the start of the position, you can continue to build a strong relationship with your candidate: send a few emails, a “care package” during finals, or ask them to represent your company at a campus information session. The key is to find non-intrusive ways to let your candidate know that you are thinking of them and are eager to have them be part of the team.

BE PREPARED
Interns can be very strategic and they are still young. Sometimes they accept a full-time offer and then back out; sometimes they use your full-time offer to negotiate a better offer from a competing company. Just be aware that you may not retain 100% of interns who accept full-time offers after having even the best internship experiences with you.

THE INTERN PERSPECTIVE

Given the strong connection I had to Vanguard and the relationships I developed through my summer internship, it was natural for me to want to continue to grow at a company I felt was invested in me and my future. After my internship, I accepted a full-time opportunity in Vanguard’s Accelerated Development Program, which brings me to my current role as the High Net Worth Services Chief of Staff. Each experience so far has been unique, challenging, and exciting in its own right and I am thankful that my decision to start my career at Vanguard has molded me into the professional I am today.

ISAMAH NWAKA
High Net Worth Services Chief of Staff, Vanguard
PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Do you wish someone would guide you through the internship process? Campus Philly has your back!

Campus Philly partners with regional colleges and universities to engage students and keep them here after they graduate. As a nonprofit that collaborates with regional employers, higher education institutions, and city and regional civic leaders, we’re your one-stop shop to building your talent pipeline and your business.

THE PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE CONNECTION
Campus Philly acts as one giant career office, thanks to invaluable relationships with more than 30 regional schools, their career offices, their faculty, and their students. When you work with us to find the perfect candidates to match your internship needs, it’s like going door-to-door to every college and university in the region.

CAMPUSPHILLY.ORG/LAUNCH: ALWAYS WORKING
This is Campus Philly’s free online job board featuring region-specific, career-launching internships and entry-level jobs for a target audience – college students and recent college grads. The site provides all the tools students and employers need to connect in an easy-to-use, responsive, and stylish platform. Go to CampusPhilly.org/Employers, create a profile, and post your position today.

FACE TO FACE
Throughout the year, Campus Philly hosts six to eight special events for employers and students to make valuable career connections. The events are off-campus are designed to inform the future workforce about the various industries and companies that are growing in the region. The events help students develop their career paths in Philadelphia and find internships and jobs so that they can stay. Employers leverage these events to recruit top talent. To get involved call 215-988-1707.

BECOME A CORPORATE MEMBER
Ready to take your recruiting to the next level? Campus Philly offers employers the opportunity to increase their employer brand visibility, amplify their recruiting efforts, and support onboarding initiatives. To learn more, visit CampusPhilly.org/Corporate-Members or call 215-988-1707.
COMMUNICATION IS KEY
• Maintain strong connections to your interns by creating a regular schedule of communication.
• Weekly check-ins, either via phone or video conference, indicate to interns that they matter to the organization.

MENTORS ARE VITAL
• Mentorship is an important part of an intern’s experience, and the role of mentors in a remote setting will not be significantly different than in an on-site internship.
• Assign a mentor that the intern can trust as a safe space to bring questions and concerns, and for help navigating the organization.
• Mentors can also assist in coaching the intern through the nuances of remote work and productivity in a virtual setting.

WHEN YOU ASSUME, YOU… (we all know the ending, right?)
• Don’t assume interns have expertise with common corporate software, like Microsoft Outlook.
• Interns may need hands-on guidance learning certain digital tools that are relevant to your business, but this presents the opportunity for professional development and skills training, which is a large part of why they look forward to internship opportunities.

AND SOME IDEAS WITH FUN IN MIND
• Schedule ‘cool downs’ on Thursdays or Fridays to talk about successes or hardships for the week. The goal is to create a social point of connection interns can look forward to.
• Keep in touch via chat apps, like Microsoft Teams, Slack, or GChat, which provide an informal platform to connect on as an alternative to email.
• Include remote interns in larger company-wide meetings. When interns are remote, it might be easier to include them in non-sensitive company-wide meetings. This helps give them a sense of company culture, teaches them about the bigger picture at your organization, and keeps them involved beyond their individual projects.

MANAGING INTERNS REMOTELY
Many of the aspects students most look forward to about an on-site internship can be replicated in a virtual environment. As your company continues to pivot to meet virtual workplace needs, we have more specific tips curated for managing interns in a remote environment.
FAQS

HOW DO I KNOW IF I NEED AN INTERN?
Many different types of organizations – large, small, nonprofit, for-profit, technical, non-technical – benefit from internship programs. Talk to managers in your company to assess your needs. Could you use help with a specific project, task, or research? Would a new, fresh perspective boost an area of your organization? Do you have a technical need, such as updating your website? Would any employees be more productive if they had some assistance?

DO I NEED TO PAY AN INTERN?
Yes, but not all interns are paid an hourly wage. As you are determining the resources needed for your internship program, be sure to explore all options. Some employers choose to offer a stipend or a scholarship to cover the cost of a credited internship. There are legal considerations if you are not paying your interns which your company’s lawyer should be consulted on.

DO I HAVE TO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE FOR INTERNS?
No, most students are covered by their parents’ or guardians’ health care plans or they obtain it through their schools.

HOW LONG ARE INTERNSHIPS?
Typically, internships last 10 to 12 weeks and run on the same timeline as semesters: fall (August through December), spring (January through May), and summer (May through August). However, your internship program can be customized to fit your needs. For example, if you have a two-month project that calls for additional help, search for interns who want to work in that timeline.

WHERE DO I FIND AN INTERN?
Contact Campus Philly!
215-988-1707 or visit CampusPhilly.org/Employers.

Endnotes

8. Fortune: Here’s why you may want to rethink that unpaid internship, 2016: fortune.com/2016/07/07/paid-interns-earn-more-job-offers-higher-salaries-than-unpaid-interns
ABOUT CAMPUS PHILLY

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ABOUT THE CHAMBER

The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia brings area businesses and civic leaders together to promote growth and create opportunity in our region. Our members represent eleven counties, three states, and roughly 600,000 employees from thousands of member companies and organizations. We advocate for regional development, business-friendly public policies, and economic prosperity. We support our members with practical, inspiring programs, resources, and events. And all that we do serves one clear, bold goal: to make Greater Philadelphia a great place for good business.

An initiative of the Chamber, the Education & Talent Action Team (ETAT) is a group of 100+ Chamber members focused on creating clear pathways for the alignment between individuals and employers, while also ensuring that we are training and engaging the region’s future leaders.

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