

An Employer's Guide to

INTERNSHIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

By: The Career Center of Columbia College Chicago

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

Internships bridge the gap between the academic and the professional worlds. As an internship supervisor at your organization, you will have support from the Internship and Career Advisors in the Career Center as you plan and execute your internship program.

By offering an academic internship, you are providing students with a form of experiential education that integrates the knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with the practical application and skill development acquired in a professional setting.

BENEFITS OF PROVIDING AN INTERNSHIP

- Give back to the next generation in the workforce.
- Assist your future recruitment needs by developing a pipeline of qualified candidates.
- Establish brand recognition among students, staff and faculty, and become known as a place to look for opportunities.
- Offer your employees a chance to lead by supervising or mentoring interns.
- Gain new perspective by assigning projects that harness the creativity of your interns.

WHY WORK WITH COLUMBIA STUDENTS?

Our students are taught in a unique academic environment that values a commitment to practice and craft. Courses provide students a reflection of a professional environment and collaborative learning opportunities allow students to put concepts into action. Columbia has a reputation of producing hardworking dedicated alumni in the creative arts and media fields.

TYPES OF OPPORTUNITIES

Academic Internship

An academic internship is a paid or unpaid external learning opportunity that is focused on professional development and career experience that can qualify for academic credit. Academic internships give students an opportunity to work for, and be mentored by, an employer within his/her field of study. Students receive real-life career experience that connects academic learning to a professional environment before graduation. To be approved for credit, the internship must meet the educational standards of Columbia College Chicago and the Department of Labor.

Paid Opportunity

A paid position or job is a career-oriented experience that does not qualify for academic credit but provides compensation for work performed. These positions can be held while students attend Columbia or post-graduation. This can include paid, non-credit internships or other paid work.

Volunteer Opportunity

A volunteer opportunity is an experience that does not receive academic credit and is unpaid. These opportunities could help boost a student's career development, resume or portfolio. Examples include unpaid, non-credit internships: as well as service-based experiences.

BENEFITS OF REQUIRING CREDIT

- Support from the Internship and Career Advisors at the Career Center in case anything goes wrong.
- More reliable interns—your intern is not only responsible to you, but to the course and the college.
- Better prepared interns—students who work with the staff at the Career Center are generally more prepared for an internship.

CREDIT VS. NON-CREDIT

The internship course is a class that requires a student to register for credit and pay tuition, similar to any other accredited college course. Both the student and the site supervisor have specific criteria that they must meet in order to qualify for an internship for credit. Most students have the option to receive credit for an approved academic internship. In some cases, companies may require that the student receives credit.

ZERO-CREDIT

The Career Center offers a zero-credit program that allows students to take an academic internship without the cost of tuition. Columbia views the zero-credit internship course the same way it views any other for-credit internship course.

PAID VS. NON-PAID

In July of 2015, the 2nd U.S. Court of Appeals declared that unpaid internships are legal when they are closely tied to interns' educations and the internships are designed chiefly to further young people's knowledge in a particular field. That said, many students prefer a paid internship to support themselves, transportation costs to the internship, and their academic expenses. If you plan to pay an intern hourly, it must meet the legal minimum wage in your county. Please note: if you are looking for the most qualified students, the best way to get them to apply is to offer compensation.

LENGTH OF THE INTERNSHIP

Internships usually run on a semester basis (fall, spring, summer) and application deadlines can be anywhere from 1-6 months before the start of a semester. The minimum hour requirement for an academic internship is 75 hours total. However, a typical internship during the fall or spring semester is 5 – 20 hours a week for up to 4 months. The expected hours (beyond the minimum) and length of the internship are determined by the site supervisor and the intern.

INTERNSHIP AGREEMENT

The Internship Agreement ensures that the mentorship and experience are valid and reviewed by the Career Center. Students agree to committing to the internship and the guidelines for receiving credit. Both the student and the site supervisor must sign the agreement and return it to their Internship and Career Advisor before the student can be registered in the course.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR STANDARDS

Columbia College Chicago strongly recommends compensating interns for their work. If you decide an internship must be unpaid, it is important that the position meets the following Department of Labor Standards under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Courts have used the “primary beneficiary test” to determine whether an intern or student is, in fact, an employee under the FLSA.

In short, this test allows courts to examine the “economic reality” of the intern-employee relationship to determine which party is the “primary beneficiary” of the relationship. Courts have identified the following seven factors as a part of the test. Columbia College Chicago requires employers to meet criteria 2-7 for an internship to be approved for credit.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. The extent to which the internship is tied to the intern’s formal education program by integrated coursework or the receipt of academic credit.
4. The extent to which the internship accommodates the intern’s academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar.
5. The extent to which the internship’s duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning.
6. The extent to which the intern’s work complements, rather than displaces, the work of paid employee while providing significant educational benefits to the intern.
7. The extent to which the intern and the employer understand that the internship is conducted without entitlement to a paid job at the conclusion of the internship.

SUPERVISOR EXPECTATIONS

Providing interns with meaningful work is imperative to ensuring your program's success. Interns should be doing work related to their desired industry that is challenging, recognized by the organization as valuable, and fills the entire work term.

Engaged and supportive supervisors are key to intern satisfaction and success. We have found the greatest level of success with supervisors whom commit to:

- Meet with their intern one-on-one at least twice per month
- Provide interns with a handbook or list of responsibilities during the internship and hold an orientation at the beginning of the internship
- Conduct an exit interview—reviewing the intern's strengths and areas that need improvement
- Invite Career Center staff and faculty to visit interns on-site
- Introduce interns to company leaders
- Provide mentorship to interns
- Give interns creative, hands-on projects to contribute to
- Encourage interns to join for meetings and networking events
- Provide a professional work environment including any equipment necessary for the intern to perform work

Site Supervisors are required to complete an evaluation at the end of the internship on the student's performance and email this directly to the Internship and Career Advisor.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Students are required to meet with their Internship and Career Advisor prior to completing an internship for credit.

Interns are advised to:

- Perform required tasks enthusiastically
- Arrive for work on-time and professionally dressed
- Ask questions when they don't understand assignments, instructions, or culture
- Complete tasks on time and communicate proactively if they are unable to meet any expectations
- Deliver quality work
- Go above and beyond
- Be a team player and work well individually

TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR DESCRIPTION:

The internship description is the opportunity to set accurate, clear and concise information that illustrates the position and gives the students an idea of what to expect from the experience. By developing a solid description, supervisors will yield a more targeted pool of applicants.

Below is a list of required description items:

- Defined expectations and objectives of day-to-day duties and tasks.
- Identify 2-3 learning outcomes identifying skills student should expect to learn through the internship
- Specific length of internship and desired hours (fall, spring, or summer)
- Location: in-office, remote or hybrid
- Name and title of direct supervisor
- Compensation (hourly rate)
- Identify specific majors if necessary or if open to different majors
- List specific skills and abilities necessary for the internship
 - Examples:
 - writing press releases
 - managing digital content
 - technical skills
 - computer applications
 - software knowledge etc.
- Specify any mobility requirements
 - Examples:
 - Long periods of standing/walking
 - If position requires lifting, indicate how many lbs. one should be able to reasonably lift
- Participation in department meetings, networking events

DOWNTIME

There are times site supervisors might find that projects are awaiting approvals or experience idle time without a dedicated task. In those instances, we offer the following suggestions to engage students:

1. Research something industry related that you have been meaning to get to but have not had the time (i.e. competitors, best times of the day to post to social media, upcoming events, potential new websites, new software, etc.)
2. Take a project from your intern's website and review it with them. Ask him/her to take one aspect of it and improve upon it, then review it together
3. Re-check a project, sharing the importance of checking for mistakes/thoroughness when working with tight deadlines.
4. Research a favorite industry-related professional or an industry "great". Talk about why you felt that person was influential.
5. Select a trend for the intern to research and discuss what they have learned and how it can impact their work.
6. Have your intern review projects and be a "focus group" for you.

PROMOTE INTERNSHIP & JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Columbia College Chicago is on Handshake, an online recruiting platform. To share your internship opportunity with Columbia students and alumni and streamline your hiring efforts at Columbia, create an employer account for free on Handshake.

Unlike other job boards, Handshake allows for powerful applicant filtering and easy multi-school management with over 400 schools in Handshake's network.

Supported by the Career Center, your opportunities will be shared with prepared students and promoted to applicable candidates.

CREATE YOUR EMPLOYER ACCOUNT

Log in to colum.edu/handshake and follow the prompts.

Once your account is approved, you can post opportunities, view applicants' profiles, and register for upcoming career fairs at Columbia. Please note, approval for employers, contacts, and job postings may take up to 1-3 business days.

GET INVOLVED WITH COLUMBIA

Employer Meet and Greets

Here to Hire is a series of recruiting events hosted by the Career Center for employers who are interested in coming to campus with multiple, current paid internship and job opportunities in the creative industries. These events are held in tandem with class visits throughout each semester to share information about your company culture and application process. On-site interviews allow for personal connection with potential candidates and can be scheduled directly by the employer or with the assistance of the Career Center Industry Relations staff.

Job Fairs

Columbia College Chicago Job and Internship Fairs give employers the opportunity to share information about their company while recruiting from Columbia's renowned pool of talent in arts and media. One and two day fairs are held at a variety of times throughout the year and are promoted to prepared candidates in our 53 Undergraduate and 10 Graduate programs. More information regarding upcoming fairs can be found at colum.edu/jobfairs.

Industry Engagement Events

This is a series of engagement opportunities and portfolio reviews designed to connect Columbia students to professionals in their career fields. Coordinated and promoted by the Career Center, these unique events introduce our talent to the professional community by cultivating interdepartmental learning opportunities.

The Career Center develops programs and services to provide Columbia College Chicago students with self-knowledge, experience and connections to industry in order to develop career confidence, enhance their employability and pursue meaningful career-related experiences.

By fostering and maintaining partnerships with faculty, staff, alumni, and employers, the Career Center creates a community of advocates that support students' interests, passions and values to help navigate the path from college to career.

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