

# Southern Oregon University's Guide to Internship Hiring

## ***What is an internship?***

An internship is an extension of a student's education and therefore is most importantly a learning opportunity. Through an internship, students are able to go outside the classroom to experience real-world learning in a professional work environment. Internships can add a great deal of value to a student's career exploration and development, and in some cases may provide early access into their chosen career.

Students typically seek an internship in a field related to their major. The work performed during an internship should be highly educational, closely supervised, include learning objectives, and reinforce a student's academic training.

Internships can be paid or unpaid. Either way, students may choose to pursue academic credit for their internship experiences, though that is not required. Internships taken for academic credit must be sponsored by a faculty member, preferably in the student's major.

## ***Why hire an intern from Southern Oregon University?***

As the public liberal arts university of the West, SOU is committed to academic rigor, innovative teaching practices, and community involvement. We attract students that are bright, motivated, and engaged – exactly the kind of individuals that employers want. Inviting an SOU student to join your team as an intern offers a variety of benefits:

- Year round source of highly motivated pre-professionals
- Effective way to recruit and evaluate potential employees
- Quality candidates for temporary or seasonal positions and projects
- Freedom for professional staff to pursue other projects
- Flexible, cost-effective work force not requiring a long-term employer commitment
- New perspectives on old problems
- Increased visibility of your organization on campus

## ***When can a student begin an internship and how long can he or she work?***

Most students will start an internship at the beginning of a 10-week academic term and finish at the end of the term. These terms begin approximately in September/October, January, March/April, and June. Depending upon the needs and preferences of everyone involved, though, the internship may begin and end at any time that is mutually agreed upon by the employer, the student, and the academic department (assuming credit is being sought).

### ***How many hours do students typically work?***

The student must work at least 30 hours for every one credit earned. Most students enroll for three or four credit hours, meaning that they would work from 90-120 hours over the course of the 10 week term. Additional credit hours may be granted under special circumstances.

If a student is not seeking academic credit, then there is no minimum number of hours required each week. The student and employer should work together, however, to ensure that enough hours are being offered to achieve the student's learning objectives.

### ***What are the employer's responsibilities?***

The employer provides opportunities to apply theory to everyday organizational and industry challenges, to further develop skills, and to network with professionals in the industry. The employer is expected to spend sufficient time supervising the student to ensure that the objectives of the internship agreement are met. The supervisor is expected to periodically evaluate the student and to communicate with a campus internship coordinator when appropriate.

It has been established that students who are earning academic credit are NOT employees of the university. The university is prohibited from accepting any liability for the acts, omissions, and conduct of the students and is prohibited from providing coverage with State Accident Insurance, liability insurance, or workers' compensation insurance. Because this is a legal issue, no definitive answer can be provided; however, prudence would argue that the employer should at least provide workers' compensation coverage.

It is important to keep in mind that hosting interns is a time-consuming prospect. Someone at the organization must be able to supervise and mentor the students, answer their questions, teach them about the field of work, and possibly complete paperwork required by the university. This can actually hinder an employer's own workflow at times. Despite the extra time, energy, and resources that may be needed, however, employers almost always report that hosting an internship is a positive and beneficial experience.

### ***Do interns get paid?***

Even if a student is earning college credit for an internship, the student is still permitted to be compensated. Paid interns make ideal workers - hungry to learn, eager to make a good impression, and willing to perform a multitude of tasks. Remember, many of our students are supporting themselves financially. By paying them, you allow them to spend more of their time and effort on the internship and less on finding other ways to pay for tuition, room and board, transportation, family, and other expenses. The relatively small amount of money employers spend on intern wages and benefits is generally a good investment.

If you are unable to pay your intern, it is still possible to offer them an outstanding experience. It is important to note, though, that unpaid internship experiences are subject to guidelines imposed by the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which applies to all companies that have at least two employees

directly engaged in interstate commerce and annual sales of at least \$500,000.00. If you meet those criteria and are not paying your intern, you must adhere to the following requirements per FLSA:

1. Interns cannot displace regular employees
2. Interns are not guaranteed a job at the end of the internship (though you may decide at the conclusion of the experience to hire them)
3. Interns are not entitled to wages during the internship
4. Interns must receive training from your organization, even if it somewhat impedes the work
5. Interns must get hands-on experience with equipment and processes used in your industry
6. Interns' training must primarily benefit them, not the organization.

***Are students provided with liability and workers' compensation coverage?***

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***What are the student's responsibilities?***

Students are expected to apply for an internship just as if they were applying for an actual job. They should supply a resume and cover letter, and they can submit other documents (like unofficial transcripts or writing samples) if requested. They are expected to arrive to the work site on-time based on a predetermined schedule and to perform to the best of their ability. Whether the internship is paid or not, students are expected to display the utmost professionalism and to communicate to the employer if they feel the internship goals are not being met for any reason. Students must establish specific goals for their internship at the beginning of the term and will report on their ability to meet those goals by the end of the term.

If the student is receiving academic credit for the internship, then he or she must obtain the following things from the employer:

- Work Site Agreement
- Agreement of Work/Learning Objectives
- Midterm Evaluation
- Final Evaluation
- Final Verified Time Sheet

Even if the student is not receiving academic credit, establishing work/learning objectives and performing formal evaluations is highly recommended in order to make the experience as beneficial as possible for the intern and the employer.

The evaluation of the student is an important part of the learning process. Candid, constructive, and immediate performance feedback is an important part of the student's professional development. We greatly appreciate your involvement in the learning process.

***Will interested businesses and organizations have to sign a formal practicum contract with the university?***

A signed "Work-Site/University Agreement" form should be signed and on file with the faculty contact for any student earning academic credit.

***How does an employer post an internship opportunity?***

Employers should post internship and job opportunities using SOU's CareerLink system by visiting <https://www.myinterfase.com/sou/employer/>. You will be asked to set up an employer account if you have not used the system before, which is very fast, free, and easy to do. You can then manage your own postings. If you have difficulties using the CareerLink system, contact Max Brooks at 541-552-6131.

***Ten Concerns of Interns (From Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, compiled and edited by Michael True)***

**Give us real work!**

It can't be said too many times that interns want to work and learn. An internship can help you get a job done that you couldn't otherwise, right? If you've brought on an intern as a recruitment tool, then how will you be able to assess their abilities? It just makes sense to utilize your interns well.

**Do what you say, and say what you do!**

Be honest with your interns about what they can expect during their internship. If the job will require stuffing some envelopes, then make that clear. But if you tell the intern they will be researching a project, and they spend 90% of their time doing "grunt work," then bad feelings will develop. Honesty doesn't cost you anything, and it will make the interns feel that much more respected.

**We like feedback!**

Remember that interns are students, and they may not have the business skills and experiences that you take for granted. If your intern makes an oversight, just pull him or her aside and explain how the situation should be handled in the future. Also, consider using a tool like InternQube.com mentioned at the end of this manual.

**We want to be included too!**

Is there a staff meeting they can attend? Can they quietly tag along to that next project meeting or office luncheon? Include them in the daily life of your workplace. After all, if you help them gain a broader perspective, it will help everyone involved.

**Please explain.**

When you assign work, make sure you give a detailed explanation. While the work may seem trivial and obvious to you, it may not be obvious to someone who's never done it before. Patience and a few extra minutes at the beginning will pay off later when your intern can produce good work independently.

### **I want a mentor!**

Make sure that interns have a mentor or supervisor to provide guidance. Make it someone who truly likes to teach, and the experience will be even better.

### **A minute of your time, please.**

The best mentor in the world is useless if he or she can't, or won't, spend the necessary time mentoring. As newcomers, interns may not speak up if they're feeling ignored, so the burden of making sure they're okay is on the mentor. They should schedule regular times to meet with the intern.

### **Be prepared!**

That wonderful day has arrived and the intern goes to start their internship only to learn that no one knew they were coming, and there is no place for them to work. Brief your staff of the student's impending arrival, and help the intern get started on a positive note.

### **Um...I need a chair.**

It is amazing how many employers hire an intern and don't think about the fact that they will need a desk, chair, phone and a computer in order to do the task assigned. It isn't fun or efficient to move an intern from desk to desk. If you want to get a job done, you need to supply the intern with the tools they need.

### **Show me the money (as best you can).**

While internships differ, and each industry has its own personality, remember that interns have expenses. In fact, if your intern is receiving academic credit for the work that they do with you, they are literally paying out of pocket for this experience since they will be charged tuition money for every credit that they earn. Your organization may not be in a position to pay much, but anything can help. Maybe you can help pay for their transportation, offer them food while on the job, arrange a stipend, or develop some other creative way to assist them.