

# **Building A Successful Internship Program**

**A Guide for Internship Site**

**CÔTTEY**

**1000 West Austin  
Nevada, MO 64772  
(417) 667-8181**

For more information contact:

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# COTTEY COLLEGE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Hosting an internship can be a rewarding experience for all involved. A successful internship provides students with an opportunity to apply their classroom learning to the workplace. Internships also provide host organizations with high-achieving workers who bring fresh perspectives and ideas. In order for an internship to be successful, the site supervisor, the intern, and Cottey College commit to working together to make the most of the opportunity.

## What is an internship?

An internship is a supervised work experience, related to a student's major or area of career interest, with intentional learning goals. A student may actively reflect on what she is learning throughout the experience. An internship includes a training component, orientation, supervision, and evaluation. It can be full-time or part-time at any time of the year. Internships are often unpaid, but may receive paid compensation.

### Checklist for Internship Site Supervisors

- Develop internship position description
- Post advertisements at Cottey College
- Interview candidates and hire intern
- Meet with intern to establish Learning Contract
- Provide/supervise orientation and training of intern
- Conduct regularly scheduled supervision meetings
- Provide end of internship evaluation

At Cottey, a faculty member and an internship site supervisor supervise an internship for course credit. The site supervisor is immediately responsible for the intern and her performance. The site supervisor completes an evaluation of the intern's performance and progress throughout the internship. The faculty sponsor is responsible for the evaluation of student learning. The faculty sponsor awards a grade and credit for the completed internship. The transfer and career planning coordinator is responsible for supporting the faculty sponsor and internship site supervisor. Most written communication will come from the transfer and career planning coordinator. **For questions regarding internships, please contact Susan A. Yoss at 417-667-8181, ext. 2132.**

## What are the benefits?

According to a national study done by the National Society for Experiential Education, 94 percent of organizations that hosted interns were satisfied or very satisfied with their interns. Supervisors valued the interpersonal skills, job-related knowledge, creativity, and writing ability interns brought to the organization. Employers and organizations benefit in the following ways:

- Gain a fresh perspective in ongoing projects and procedures
  - Access students with special skills and knowledge
  - Gain enthusiastic and motivated pre-professionals
  - Develop supervisory skills of staff
  - Receive assistance with special projects
  - Increase your organization's visibility on campus and in the community
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# LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Before you start an internship, lay the groundwork for its success. Internship activities are as varied as companies are in age, size, industry and product. Design an internship program that meets your needs.

## **Step 1: Assess organization goals**

A careful discussion with key people in your organization can create a consensus on internship program goals. Internships can be designed to best meet those goals and expectations. A series of questions may need answered before hosting an intern.

- What does your company hope to achieve from participating in an internship program?
  - Are you a small company searching for additional help on a project?
  - Are you a nonprofit that doesn't have a lot of money to pay, but can provide an interesting and rewarding experience?
- What human resources do you have to support an intern?
  - Can your organization invest the time and energy into the intern's learning and growth?
  - Can you provide patient support, planning, direction, instruction and encouragement for the intern?
- What physical resources do you have to support an intern?
  - Do you have a safe, adequate workspace with available technology appropriate for the intern's activities?
- What could an intern do for you? What should be your goals?
  - What specific skills and preparation are essential for an incoming intern?

## **Step 2: Develop a job description**

Once you carefully plan and write out your internship program and goals, draft a job description that clearly explains the internship duties. A written job description, even if preliminary, assists in the marketing of the position and recruitment of interns. It also forms the basis of the learning contract between your organization, the intern, and the faculty sponsor.

A large part of producing effective position descriptions involves the development of challenging work assignments that complement students' academic programs. As part of the educational process, internship work activities should focus on projects specifically related to the academic major and the degree the interns expect to receive. Cottey provides an *Internship Position Description* form that may help you develop a description that is useful to our students.

## **Step 3: Recruit interns**

Begin recruiting interns several months prior to your need. Starting early has advantages: the longer you accept applications, the better your chance of finding the best person for the job. Your process for selection of an intern should be similar to recruitment for entry-level employees. This approach is a learning process for the intern. Your initial screening may (but not necessarily) include an application, resume, letter of inquiry, and samples of relevant work. An interview, even by phone, combined with your assessment of the student's application, will give you a sense of who will be the best fit for the internship.

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# THE INTERNSHIP

## Step 1: Establish a Learning Contract

A successful internship starts with a good plan. The Internship Learning Contract lays out a plan of action for achieving learning goals and assessing progress. It defines the responsibilities and expectations for all three parties involved to create a satisfying internship experience.

The intern is primarily responsible for developing learning goals, but will need to consult extensively with the internship site supervisor and the faculty sponsor. The goals should answer three basic questions: (1) what do I want to learn, (2) how will I learn it, and (3) how will I know I'm learning it or have learned it?



Check out  
"TIPS for Drafting A  
Learning Contract."

## Step 2: Orient and Train the Intern

**Orientation** can be a formal or informal process depending on the number of interns and needs of the organization. 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:

1. *Information* · Explain the mission of the organization. Offer interns your organization's literature to review and any other documents that may help the intern to understand who benefits from your product or services. If available, include an organizational chart that explains various roles and responsibilities of employees.
2. *Structure* · Outline the organizational rules, policies and expectations. Interns might not be familiar with formal workplace procedures (e.g., attendance policies, break times, days off). Discuss specific industry jargon or acronyms. Security or confidentiality issues may need to be addressed, as well as, access to certain information.
3. *Introductions* · Take time in the beginning of the internship to introduce the intern to key people in the organization. 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.

**Training** is as important as orientation. 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 that was signed at the beginning of the internship to assist you. Ongoing training will keep students interested in the position and ready to tackle new challenges. Ongoing training may include development of specific skills,

supervisor shadowing, encouragement of questions, and participation in professional conferences or meetings.

### **Step 3: Supervise**

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. 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.

#### *General guidelines for effective supervision*

- *Know your intern's learning objectives.* Review the learning contract periodically. Encourage the intern to reflect on the relationship between the learning objectives and the work experience.
- *Provide frequent, specific, descriptive feedback to your intern.* Schedule regular meetings with your intern to review progress on projects, touch base, and provide feedback.
- *When problems occur, communicate directly with your intern.* A face-to-face meeting is preferable to a written note or even a phone call.
- *Use the academic support available at Cottey.* If you question how to deal with a particular situation, consult your contacts on the academic side. Take advantage of this resource whenever appropriate.

### **Step 4: Evaluate**

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.

#### *Criteria to consider when evaluating an intern are:*

- Progress towards or accomplishment of learning objectives as stated in the learning contract
- 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

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



# **HOW CAN THE SUPERVISOR WORK MOST EFFECTIVELY WITH THE INTERN?**

## **COMMUNICATION**

Clear communication is the key to effective supervision in all internships.

- Clarify intern's role through the formal learning contract (clarify job responsibilities, set goals, set regular work hours, etc.)
- Schedule regular meetings with the intern to discuss new and past assignments, to answer any questions, and discuss dynamics of the organization.
- Give the intern opportunity to attend meetings (staff, committee, or legislative) whenever possible.
- Explain to the intern how decisions are made.
- Structure and supervise the internship more highly in the beginning, and ease off when the time seems appropriate.
- Remember: Interns need to receive regular descriptive feedback on their progress. Are they meeting expectations? Let them know.
- If problems do occur, speak directly with the intern. If the supervisor is unsure how to deal with a particular situation, a phone call to the faculty sponsor or the internship coordinator is recommended.

## **REWARDS**

No rules exist in this area. Supervisors are encouraged to use creativity in rewarding interns for work well done. Some suggestions include:

- Give the intern opportunities to attend professional seminars and workshops provided within or by the organization.
- Give them the opportunity to meet the administration, board members, VIPs or director.
- Give the intern the opportunity to interview or observe other departments/areas of the organization.
- Recognize them for doing things right.
- Note the intern's name on a finished project to give credit and recognition.
- Provide student with contact people known to help in future job hunting.

## **MOTIVATION**

- Make interns feel like a member of the team.
- Challenge the intern and show respect for the intern's talent and abilities.
- Give the intern a designated work area.
- Give interns a sense of planning and involvement by hearing their ideas.
- Select/organize assignments so that progress is observable for interns (the feeling of making a difference is a big motivator!).
- Give constructive, descriptive criticism.
- Help interns to understand their jobs in relation to other jobs.

## **COMPLETION**

Organizations, colleges, and interns must plan for the internship ending date from the beginning. It is important to set realistic goals for completing projects and for transferring them to other personnel. This prevents incomplete work, abandoned clients, and helps to keep a timeline. A good way to end the internship is by holding some form of celebration. This is a comfortable means of recognizing the completion of the internship experience.

