

General Information for Employers Internships and Co-Operative Education

This information is for employers who are interested in developing an internship program. Most colleges and universities follow the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) guidelines and comply with the Department of Labor – Fair Labor Standards Act (DOL-FLSA).

First, **what exactly is an “internship”?** The following is USF’s definition of an internship which is based on the NACE definition:

An Internship is a work or service experience related to a student’s major or career goal that integrates the knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting under the supervision of practicing professionals.

Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths. A distinguishing factor of internships, from a temporary job or volunteer position, is that internships have intentional “learning objectives” and deliberate mentoring.

Why have an internship program? There are many benefits to an internship program, such as:

- Partnering with USF (or other academic institution) and giving back to the community through supporting our education and workforce development mission.
- Establishing connections with students before they graduate for recruiting purposes.
- Infusing the organization’s current workforce with the energy created by interns through their ideas, their up-to-date knowledge-base, and their enthusiasm.
- Accessing a skilled and motivated talent pool as part of a comprehensive talent management strategy.

What is required for an opportunity to qualify as an Internship? The following criteria is adapted from NACE, as well as the DOL-FLSA criteria regarding intern pay, and is required for Internships:

1. The experience should be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
2. The skills or knowledge learned must be valuable and transferable to other employment settings.
3. The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
4. There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the student’s professional career goals.
5. There is supervision by a subject matter expert professional who can mentor the student’s growth.
6. There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
7. There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.

See <https://www.naceweb.org/advocacy/position-statements/united-states-internships.aspx> for details.

**For more information: Lynn Chisholm, Director, USF Office of Internships and Career Readiness
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Who can supervise an internship? Based on the criteria above, an internship should be supervised by someone who:

- Can serve as an experienced subject matter expert (in other words, the student is not the subject matter “expert”) who can guide and mentor the intern regarding development and application of content areas and can provide supportive feedback for continued growth.
- Is accessible and on-site during the internship hours and time-frame.
- Has an interest in working with an intern and a positive attitude toward the learning process.
- Is considered professional staff and can serve as a professional role model for the intern.

When can interns work? Interns are typically full-time college students available on a part-time schedule of 20-35 hours on a Monday through Friday business schedule. An intern’s specific schedule can be discussed and negotiated based on his/her availability. Internships generally run on an academic schedule, especially if the intern is earning academic credit.

What should I pay the intern? Intern pay is governed under the DOL FLSA and criteria and should be considered based on the following:

- For-profit businesses offering an internship that results in a work product that benefits their organization must pay the intern.
- Course credit does not negate the need to pay an intern under the law. Paid internships offer a more competitive and attractive opportunity for students.
- Non-profit organizations, which are often operated by a volunteer work force, may offer an unpaid internship as long as it follows the educational criteria above and provides career-relevant experience.
- The range of pay varies by industry based on the market value of an entry-level position in that field, and increasing based on geographic location, market competition, skill set, major, and level of education. See the NACE chart below for average pay by educational level.

Average Intern and Co-op hourly wage, National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018

Degree and year of study	Average intern hourly wage rates	Average co-op hourly wage rates
High School	\$10.50	Varies by industry
Associate degree	\$12.96	\$14.03
Bachelor's degree, freshman	\$15.05	\$14.30
Bachelor's degree, junior/senior	\$18.73	\$19.35
Master's degree	\$22.21	\$23.46
Doctoral degree	\$31.25	\$25.68

For more information on intern pay:

DOL - FLSA criteria for paid vs unpaid - <http://www.dol.gov/whdregs/compliance/whdfs71.htm>

NACE's full report: <https://www.naceweb.org/store/2017/internship-and-co-op-report/>

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How should we proceed with developing a program? You may have some additional considerations to determine within your organization and involving your senior leadership and human resources including:

- The purpose and function of internships in your organization
- How it fits into a career pathway within your organization
- The length and volume of your internship activity (multi-term Co-Op vs single internship; several interns vs just one, etc.)
- What learning will take place as part of the internship experience (formal programming, informal ad hoc, weekly topic-focused, student-driven research, etc.)
- The resources you have to support an internship program (supervision, workspace, computer, materials, staff, time, training, etc.)

How should we hire an intern? Once you know what you want your internship program to achieve and how you plan to support it, the process steps will typically follow what your new hire process steps are. Consult your HR professionals for the steps used in your organization, but typically the steps include: develop/approve the position; post the position (USF uses Handshake) review resumes, interview candidates, complete HR screenings for candidates to hire, provide on-boarding (including orientation), develop the student's Internship Learning Plan (with SMART goals), and begin!

How should we structure the learning? Harness the power of critical reflection through your supervisory conversations as you mentor your intern. At USF we've adapted the Iowa GROW (Guided Reflection On Work) framework for our Engaged Student Employment program. It provides a beneficial framework for supporting learning for students in the workplace using the following prompts (and our 4th additional prompt):

1. What are you learning here at work that helps you at school?
2. What are you learning at school that helps you here at work?
3. What are a couple of examples of things that you're learning at work that you think will help you in your future profession?
4. What would you like to learn more about to help you towards your future profession?

At USF we also utilize ePortfolio as a practice to help students to deepen and expand what they're learning around the NACE Career Readiness competencies and in relationship with their future career goals. Students can begin this practice through a professional journal (using the questions above, or other reflections), a blog, or through an ePortfolio (we like Portfolium.com, but there are many free options for students) as a learning network connected by interests and industries. These practices add value to the work and learning that takes place through the internship and helps students to begin to connect and mature their ideas around what they are learning at work.

<http://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/>

What if I have questions? For best results, work with your local college or university campus. This way you can reach the broadest audience for recruitment and cover all the experiential learning bases. Reach out to your campus internship or career professionals, and if you need help identifying a campus near you, the Florida Career Centers website can be of assistance: <http://floridacareercenters.org/>

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