



Industry Resource to Hosting Interns

Internships, as defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), “represent a pivotal form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths, and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.”

Use this guide as you contemplate partnering with a community college to establish an internship program. Here, you will find insightful points to help craft a program that is mutually beneficial to all parties. By inviting community college students into your workplace, you are not only fostering their professional growth but also strengthening your position as a community ally.



PAID INTERNSHIPS:

A Key Component

Offering paid internships aligns with NACE’s fundamental purpose of recognizing the value of experiential learning. Compensation not only acknowledges the significance of this learning approach but also contributes to expanding accessibility and a more inclusive program. This is especially crucial for underserved populations who may not be able to afford to work without pay. Paid internships establish a foundation for a productive and mutually beneficial relationship, fulfilling both educational and business objectives.



BENEFITS OF HOSTING INTERNS

The internship program benefits the host employer as well as the intern. Hosting interns can help an organization gain fresh perspectives, new ideas, and wide-ranging skill sets. These new ideas can help jump start your professional workforce.

Benefits to the employer include:

- The students involved are highly motivated, eager to learn, dependable, and aspiring – their enthusiasm can motivate current company employees.
- The internship provides an excellent source of skilled, temporary personnel.
- The employer can experiment with new positions without making expensive, long-range commitments.
- Establishing meaningful programs that foster positive relationships with interns can enhance brand awareness within communities.



COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

Your Partners in Building the Workforce

Students seek to develop real world skills and the suitability of their chosen field. Collaborating with local community colleges to provide exposure to professional settings and hands-on training aligns with these aspirations and benefits both students and companies. Ensuring that you are ready to develop new talent is the first step when considering a partnership with a community college to develop an internship program.

INTERNSHIP DESIGN

Once you have decided to bring interns into your organization, work with your local community college to partner in the design and implementation of an internship program that can align objectives and create an environment of growth and exploration for the interns. Build your foundation with a well-defined vision, objectives, and solid program design. This framework should address essential aspects that include program management, work readiness, partner identification, financial planning and funding sources, as well as legal responsibilities.

Key considerations include:

1. Project and Assignment Planning
 - Identify workforce gaps for valuable learning opportunities.
 - Determine if the interns will work as a part of a team or individually.
 - Assess the availability of workspace or the possibility of remote projects.
 - Develop a job description that includes minimum requirements, expected working hours, and essential job duties.
2. Internship Logistics
 - Determine the number of interns you have the capacity to host.
 - Determine the duration of the internship, an ideal start date, and the weekly hours anticipated.
3. Mentorship and Supervision
 - Consider who will provide ongoing oversight of student performance and hours worked.
 - Determine the capacity of staff to commit to mentor and develop students.
4. Educational Alignment and Work Readiness
 - Review the curriculum of the local community college and work with them in enhancing it to support the skills needed in your future workforce.
 - Explore flexibility with scheduling to accommodate students' courses.
5. Financial Considerations
 - Assess available funding to support paid internships.
 - Decide on hiring interns as short-term employees, or using an employer-of-record service.
6. Onboarding and Company Culture
 - Ensure interns understand work expectations, company culture, policies, and safety protocols.
 - Integrate this into the onboarding process on the first day.

First Day Essentials for Interns

- Where do I report on my first day (specific building, office number, etc.)?
- Who do I report to on my first day?
- What is the dress code?
- Where should I park?
- What is the protocol for rest and meal breaks? Do I need to notify you when I take my break?
- What should I do if I've completed a project and no further projects have been assigned?



MENTORING VS. SUPERVISING

Supervision of an intern is different from onboarding and orienting a new employee. Internships are meant to be a learning experience to bridge the gap between education and industry, and therefore, more questions and more support should be expected. Recognizing that for many community college students, an internship might be their first opportunity to build social capital and gain exposure to professionals, it is essential to consider how you supervise your interns. Connecting an intern with a designated professional who can be responsible for their supervision and serve as a mentor who guides their performance in their first professional environment is key to their success. The individual should enjoy sharing their knowledge and expertise, have the capacity to be available on a regular basis, and possess strong communication skills and patience. Scheduled check-ins with the intern that are a safe space to ask questions, get to know each other, establish goals, review project progress, and provide feedback are an important practice to put into place.

Other considerations for mentoring:

- Use storytelling. Share your own personal experiences with being new to a situation or project. How did you overcome thoughts of imposter syndrome or fear of failure?
- Help them understand their contribution. Explain why the project that they are assigned to is important to the big picture. Use it as a platform to further explain the company's purpose or customer base.
- Make it a safe space. Help them understand that you are a safe space to ask questions, talk about mistakes, and troubleshoot. Mistakes will happen. Let them know that you expect them but want to have discussions about lessons learned and how they can improve their process moving forward.
- Promote professional relationships. Talk to the intern about the importance of building relationships in the workplace. Invite them to a project meeting or lunch to introduce them to staff and help them learn more about the industry.
- Encourage self-reflection. Ask them questions about how the experience is affecting their career outlook. Is the internship meeting their expectations? Have they discovered a new skill that they unexpectedly enjoy? Now that they've been exposed to a professional environment, are there other roles that interest them more that you can help clarify?
- Build a Portfolio. Urge the intern to maintain a record of their achievements to reflect on with you. Help them create or update their profile on LinkedIn or a resume.

Evaluations

Providing the intern with an opportunity for formalized feedback on their performance as well as an opportunity for them to provide feedback about their experience is an important part of their learning experience. Focus on the learning objectives or goals that were established at the beginning of their internship and provide feedback on their successes and areas for improvement.

Evaluation parameters can include:

- **Ability to Learn:** asks pertinent questions, and learns from mistakes.
- **Communication:** engages in meetings, and demonstrates effective communication skills.
- **Problem Solving Skills:** ability to break down large tasks into manageable pieces.
- **Professionalism:** respectful, timely, positive attitude.
- **Collaborative Skills:** contributes to team objectives.



LIGHTEN THE LOAD WITH CAREER CATALYST

As you embark on your journey of internship design, consider this guide a roadmap for fostering an environment of growth and exploration. The Foundation for California Community Colleges (FoundationCCC), through its employer-of-record service, Career Catalyst, stands ready to support organizations in offering paid work experiences. With a commitment to seamless and mutually beneficial relationships, we accelerate paths to economic and social mobility for all involved. Since 1998, FoundationCCC has championed student jobs through Career Catalyst, extending services to state and local agencies, private companies, workforce intermediaries, and more. Our comprehensive suite, covering short-term to full-time employment, manages liability, human resource functions, and compensation.

Benefits for Employers

1. **Employer of record.** FoundationCCC serves as the employer of record, administering payroll, managing workers' compensation, and addressing human resource needs.
2. **Comprehensive services.** Career Catalyst offers an all-in-one web-based human resources service, making it easy for your organization to manage employees. Features include paperless employee acquisition, online timekeeping, payroll, and employee access to paystubs, W-2s, and training videos.
3. **Customer-service focused.** Career Catalyst is backed by dedicated human resources, workforce development, and payroll specialists ready to assist your organization.
4. **Established partnerships.** FoundationCCC is the official nonprofit supporting the largest system of higher education in the nation and partners with some of the nation's largest companies, foundations, and state agencies.
5. **Flexible support.** Our services can support short-term, part-time, summer, and full-time employment. Career Catalyst serves private companies, industry associations, state and local agencies, workforce intermediaries, colleges, and nonprofit organizations.

Receive a [Career Catalyst Service Estimate](#).

Sources:

- [Creating a Meaningful Learning Experience for Students](#), The University of Vermont
- [Employer Best Practices Playbook - Integrating Young Talent into Your Workplace](#), NYC Center for Youth Employment
- [Employer Internship Toolkit](#), San Diego State
- [Open the Door: Disparities in Paid Internships](#), NACE