

CASNR

Internship Guide

In the following pages, you will find information needed to get started in the development of an internship program in coordination with the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. This guide is not designed to be an exhaustive resource, as the design and implementation of an internship program varies from employer to employer. However, we hope it answers many of the common concerns and questions often asked about internship development.

Why Consider Hosting an Internship?

Hosting an internship can be a great experience for both employers and students. A successful internship experience provides students with practical and meaningful experiences directly related to a future career. Internships serve to introduce students to potential professions and organizations, while providing opportunities to “test-drive” a career choice and apply classroom learning in a professional work setting.

Internships also provide host employers with energetic, high-achieving workers who bring unique ideas and enthusiasm to organizations. Many employers use internships as a valuable component of their recruiting strategy. Internships provide employers with the opportunity to identify and assess potential full-time hires early, tap into fresh new talent, and gain campus visibility. Additionally, there is reduced turnover and training among entry-level employees who were former interns.

Definition of an Internship

An internship can be defined in many ways, but most have the following common characteristics:

- Provides meaningful, career-related work that extends the students’ learning beyond the classroom.
- Ensures ongoing communication and engagement between the intern and the organization through careful monitoring by a site supervisor and career mentor.
- Involves intentional learning with specific goals and objectives supporting students’ academic and career interests.
- Allows sufficient time for students to actively reflect on experiences.

The setting may be a non-profit organization, a government office or a private/public for-profit business. The time frame may be summer, spring, fall or some combination of the three. The placement may be for academic credit or not. These factors and other specific characteristics of each internship experience are determined by the employer and/or in collaboration with the student intern(s).

While most experiences have some level of busy work or laborious tasks, employers are encouraged to focus the majority of interns’ experiences on activities and responsibilities allowing learning and exploration of the organization, the industry and the career path while adding value to both an interns’ qualifications and to the employer. Students tend to share their experiences with others, and positive learning experiences are the best publicity an employer can produce, even if an intern discovers the career path is not best suited for him or her.



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Compensation Consideration

While not all interns are compensated for their work and experiences, in most fields related to agricultural sciences and natural resources, paid internships are the norm. The typical wage for compensating student interns is approximately 75 percent of a full-time, entry-level employee wage in the corresponding career field.

Academic Credit

All students in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources can receive academic credit for their internship experiences through Oklahoma State University, and some majors require internship credit for completion of the degree. Ultimately, the decision to pursue academic credit is the responsibility of the student, and if academic credit is to be earned for the internship experience, the student must receive approval from his or her academic adviser, a departmental internship coordinator or the department head before placement at an internship site. The student also is responsible for communicating with his or her employer about supervisor obligations related to earning academic credit, which may include a formal internship contract with defined learning objectives, a time log of hands-on internship hours, formal performance evaluations, communication with a faculty internship supervisor, or other commitments.

Designing Your Program

Once it is determined the employer has the resources and structure to support a successful internship program, the planning begins. Advance planning is key to developing a high-quality internship program. The following six guidelines should help you get started in establishing an internship site:

1. Create a Job Description

Just like with any open position, you should include the specific duties and projects associated with the internship. It also is important to include the internship duration (fall, spring, or summer), hours (part- or full-time) and compensation in the description.

2. Select a Site Supervisor

To ensure appropriate supervision, coaching and mentoring takes place, interns should be paired with an on-site supervisor/career mentor. The supervisor and intern should meet on a regular basis, and the supervisor should be accessible for consultation throughout the experience.

3. Develop Specific Projects & Assignments

Whenever possible, identify and delegate projects that have a definite beginning and end in the internship time frame. This structure allows interns to feel like an important and integrated team member of the organization and also provides concrete and measurable outcomes at the conclusion of the experience. For example, a measurable learning objective might be, "The intern will produce a marketing plan for ABC product line." Conversely, an immeasurable learning objective might be, "The intern will acquire an understanding of our marketing concepts."



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4. Outline Basic Intern Training

The training program should cover the basics, including an overview of the organization's mission, an office tour, staff introductions and other basic information and expectations, such as dress code, where to park, work hours, office policies and other details. This training may be a formal orientation process or one-on-one with the supervisor/career mentor.

5. Market Your Internship

CASNR Career Services will assist you in identifying the most effective recruitment methods to reach the intern candidates you are targeting. Recruitment opportunities include internship postings on the Hire System as well as on-campus activities such as career fairs, information sessions, class and club visits, on-campus interviews and other activities. The goal is to assist you in building your employer brand among students and reaching the right candidates for your internship. Remember, employers are competing against one another to attract the best candidates to their organization; therefore, we encourage organizations to be proactive and involved to reach the best students on our university campus.

6. Interview and Select an Intern

For the most part, the process for the selection of an intern is similar to the recruitment of an entry-level professional employee, and the interview process may be conducted at your organization or on the OSU campus, depending upon the strategies you utilize to reach the right students.

7. Make the Offer in a Timely Manner

Because internships are extremely competitive in today's job market, steady communication and follow-up in the selection process is very important. A lapse in communication during the selection process may result in a top candidate accepting an internship elsewhere. Additionally, many employers recruit and extend internship offers at least one semester prior to the beginning of the experience; in fact, it is not unusual for employers to recruit, interview and extend internship offers during the fall semester for placement the following summer.

Who do I contact to get started?

Contact CASNR Career Services at [405.744.9464](tel:405.744.9464) or casnr@okstate.edu with questions about developing an internship program or to coordinate recruitment of students for your organization's internship opportunities.



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