

# EMPLOYERS' GUIDE TO INTERNSHIPS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH

At UW Oshkosh we believe that internships provide great opportunities for our students to learn professional skills and gain marketable experience. Internships are a great way to offer a mutually beneficial relationship for both students and employers. Internship opportunities offer employers access to highly motivated students and the opportunity to fill temporary job openings, free up permanent staff for other projects, or ease the load during busy seasons.

UW Oshkosh Career Services is a great resource to your company for internships and resources on our campus. Career Services offers the College of Letters & Science Internship Coordinator, Chrissy Lambie who can help connect you to Titan Jobs and specific departments within the College of Letters & Sciences. There is also a College of Business Internship Director, Jessie Pondell who can assist you in connecting with the business departments & students. You may also, if you have a connection or feel comfortable, connect with specific department faculty for your needs. UW Oshkosh feels very strongly about providing our students quality internships and experiential education opportunities that allow them to progress in their own personal and career development.

## What is an internship?

Generally, internships are designed by the employer to meet the needs of the organization while at the same time providing for the needs of the intern. Interns make a short-term commitment to work for an employer in order to achieve learning objectives, gain valuable experience and exposure to their field of interest. The employer in turn, commits to providing the interns with a learning experience, specific work assignments, and training.

Internship programs offer an opportunity for students to expand their education into the world of work. Students seek internships that allow them to build professional experience in their field of interest, test tentative career choices, receive mentoring, establish a professional network, and make their academic studies more relevant.

Internship usually last a semester (14 weeks) or a summer. Internships can be part-time, full-time, paid or unpaid. They may be part of an educational program, carefully monitored and evaluated for academic credit. Or, they can be part of a learning plan that the intern develops. The important element that distinguishes an internship from a short-term job or community service is the intentional "learning objectives" that the intern brings to the experience and the employer provides. It is the responsibility of the student to work with their faculty internship coordinator if s/he is enrolled for academic credit during the internship.

## Employer Responsibilities

- Offer a true career-related experience that enhances academic learning. Hiring a student to perform busy-work (i.e. data entry, filing, answering phones, etc.) are appropriate internship experiences only when balanced with meaningful professional responsibilities. The internship serves as a link between classroom learning and practical application so it should involve the student in making decisions and learning about a field through hands-on experience.
- Provide a position description that will describe the internship. If students are enrolling in academic credit for the internship, they may be required to complete an Internship Agreement from their academic department, which they are responsible for sharing with you. This is an opportunity for you and the student to clearly define the learning objectives and job duties for the internship.
- Appoint someone to act as a mentor/supervisor during the experience. Be sure that this person has the time to oversee the student's performance and offer constructive feedback. Provide an orientation for the student to the work site. Introduce the student to the organization, the employees, the physical layout, and the order of responsibility. Be sure the student intern knows the general philosophy and procedures of operation for the organization as a whole. Inform the intern of the rules and expectations

to be followed.

- Provide the intern with ongoing feedback and conduct a performance evaluation. You can use your organization's performance evaluation or an evaluation provided to you as indicated in the learning agreement.

# Announcing Your Internship Opportunity

There are several options to start the process of advertising your internship position:

1. You may manage your own positions on Titan Jobs, the university's online job-posting database. All university students have access to these positions. To create your account or log-on to your existing account, visit <https://www.myinterfase.com/uwosh/employer/home.aspx>  
For assistance with your account, you can contact Career Services at 920-424-2181 or [cservice@uwosh.edu](mailto:cservice@uwosh.edu).
2. In addition, you can submit the posting directly to the College of Letters & Sciences Internship Coordinator, Chrissy Lambie. Chrissy will be happy to share your opportunity with the department or faculty of the students you are trying to recruit. It can be emailed to [lambiec@uwosh.edu](mailto:lambiec@uwosh.edu).  
When sending the position, be sure to include
  - a brief description of the anticipated job duties
  - an estimate of the number of hours/week
  - dates of employment
  - estimated compensation
  - information regarding the type of student you are seeking such as:
    - particular major
    - minimum GPA
    - year in school
    - technical skills
    - courses taken
  - application/selection process
  - your contact info

Once your position is posted, Career Services will ensure that students are aware of the opportunity. This is achieved through Titan Jobs, emails to students, listings on the College's bulletin board and website, and even communication with faculty members.

## Hiring Process

As the hiring organization, you will have the opportunity to select the candidate who best fits your needs. The hiring process will take place as you outline in your position description. After the position is posted, each student is responsible for contacting you and you will then select the applicant who best meets your needs through the selection process you choose.

You also have the option to utilize our On-Campus Interviewing system to set up interview schedules and conduct

interviews in the Career Services office. If you are interested in setting up an On-Campus Interviewing schedule please contact Sarah Kriha at [krihas@uwosh.edu](mailto:krihas@uwosh.edu) or 920-424-1350.

## Starting an Internship Program at Your Organization

### 3. Decide what the intern will do.

- **Special Projects:** If you are like most employers, you have a long “wish list” of special projects that need to be done but don’t have the personnel resources to organize and implement them. Because of the nature of their academic schedules, students often look for internship opportunities of limited duration (generally 14 weeks) or with flexibility regarding their schedules if you wish them to stay on longer. Interns can be an ideal solution for your organization. For example, interns can be assigned to organize research projects, plan special events, develop special promotional campaigns, or design web pages. When developing an internship involving special projects, you should identify goals, timelines, and outcomes so that everyone understands the purpose and expectations involved.
- **On-going Operations:** Certain businesses and organizations routinely experience peak periods where additional staff is needed. Others may operate under very limited budgets and need additional staff throughout the year. Again, interns may be able to alleviate some of these problems. For example, interns may be assigned to serve as facilitators for youth groups, human resource management support staff, public relations assistants or marketing associates. Remember that students are looking for internships that provide them with professional experience with an opportunity to learn.

### 4. Determine how much time the intern will spend with you.

- **How long will the internship last?** Determine how much time it will take to accomplish the goals. Generally, students are available for a semester (14 weeks) or a summer internship with some students considering longer term internships. The semester time frames for UWO internships are as follows (generally):
  - September through 2nd week of December (Fall semester)
  - January (Winter Interim-3 weeks)
  - February through 2nd week of May (Spring semester)
  - 3rd week of May-1st week of June (Spring Interim-3 weeks)
  - June through August (Summer Session-8 weeks).

Exceptions can be made for students when your internship doesn’t fit into one of the semesters.

- **Part-time or Full-time?** Many students intern full-time during the summer when they don’t have classes. Some local internships are set up on a part-time basis (10-20 hours per/week), allowing students to gain experience while maintaining a partial or full load of credits. Co-op opportunities are also options for students to gain credit.

### 5. Establish the Necessary Organizational Support:

- Designate a mentor/supervisor for the intern.
- Decide whether the intern will work in one department or several.
- Determine the kind of orientation and training the intern will need.
- Provide safe working facilities. Make available equipment, supplies, and space necessary for the student to perform his/her duties.
- Assume liability for work-related injuries sustained by the intern, insofar as the agency may

determine the same to be required by law in that state.

6. Write a Position Description which Includes the following:

- Brief organization description and organization website
- Position title
- Skills and qualifications required/preferred
- Duties and responsibilities
- Pay rate (or indicate that it is unpaid)
- Hours per week
- Location (city, state)
- Start/End dates of the internship
- How to apply and any deadline to apply
- How many positions are available

If you would like some assistance with writing your position description, contact Chrissy.

## Liability Concerns

### Medical insurance

Students are responsible for obtaining their own medical insurance for injuries to self. UW Oshkosh's Student Health Center has student medical insurance available; the student may be able to be listed on their parent's health insurance policy; or the student could obtain insurance through another local vendor.

### Worker's Compensation

If a student is paid in an employment capacity, the student should be covered by the employer's workers' compensation policy. If a student is in an unpaid position or received a stipend, it is highly advisable for an employer to obtain a rider to its existing workers' compensation policy to cover the intern.

### Professional Liability

Many students are able to obtain liability insurance for a low cost through UW Oshkosh Risk Management department or through a professional association in their field.

## Wages

### Do you offer a paid or unpaid internship?

We believe it is desirable to compensate interns in some manner. Students participating in paid internships can alleviate some of their student debt. Employers also benefit by attracting the best applicants and maintaining a stronger sense of accountability with the interns. Many companies pay interns at least minimum wage but non-

Under federal wage and labor laws, student interns can be unpaid if six factors are met under the Learner Trainee criteria:

1. The training is similar to that which would be given in vocational school.
2. The training is for the benefit of the students.
3. The students do not displace regular employees.
4. The employer derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the student.\*
5. The students are not entitled to a job at the end of the training period.
6. The employer and the student understand that the student is not entitled to wages.

\*Shelly Kaplan, general council for NACE, states, "Several court rulings, while not addressing the criteria head on, seem to suggest that as long as the internship is a prescribed part of the curriculum, is part of the school's educational process, and is predominately for the benefit of the student, the fact that the employer received some benefit from the student's services does not make the student an employee for purposes of wage and hour law." (Fall 2002 NACE Journal, p7)

A stipend is typically a lump sum, is not related to work performed, and usually covers costs associated with the internship like lodging, clothing, transportation, child care, and tuition; whereas salary/wages are received regularly and are related to work performed. Wage and hour law does not use the term "stipend." If a person is entitled to be paid, then the stipend must equate to at least minimum wage.

The federal and state work-study programs will support students who are doing internships at qualifying organizations. Students must also be eligible for work-study financial aid. For more information contact the Financial Aid Office.

## How much should we pay an intern?

We recommend identifying a fair entry-level starting salary for a similar position at your organization and multiplying it by a percentage to determine the intern's salary. The percentage will vary depending on the intern's education level and experience. For example, a senior may earn 80-90%, a junior 80-85%, a sophomore 75-80%, and a freshman may earn 70-75% of a typical starting salary for a similar position. If you follow this rule of thumb, you can offer increases each year to returning interns and stay within your current salary structure.

## For More Information

For more information or assistance with creating your internship program, contact Chrissy Lambie, College of Letters & Sciences Internship Coordinator at UW Oshkosh Career Services. 920-424-2044 or [lambiec@uwosh.edu](mailto:lambiec@uwosh.edu)

For College of Business internships, contact Jessie Pondell at [pondellj@uwosh.edu](mailto:pondellj@uwosh.edu) or 920-424-3032.