

How to Start an Internship Program

Texas A&M University, Department of Horticultural Sciences

Internships provide students with the chance to gain field-related work experience while at the same time trying out a potential career path and/or prospective employer. In addition, internships allow students to put what they learn in class into practice. For many, it makes the science and theory come to life.

Internships are NOT to be used as a cheap source of labor.

Benefits of having an intern: Hiring an intern is a great way for employers to get to know a potential employee's knowledge, skills, and personality before making a permanent commitment.

Create a program: When creating an internship program it is helpful to list what you want the program to accomplish both for the company and the intern.

- What do you want the intern to accomplish?
 - Set goals and specific projects for the intern to complete during the duration of the internship. Special projects are a great way to create a sense of ownership and pride for the project, while benefiting the company's overall goal.
- Internship details, requirements and working conditions
 - Very important details of the internship such as the duration, hours per week, work schedule (fixed or flexible), responsibilities/duties, and a designated space for the intern to work should be set prior to the start of the internship.
- Will you provide housing for the intern?
 - Housing is often the biggest struggle for students; therefore, provided housing or offering assistance can be a major recruiting plus.
- How much are you willing to pay your intern?
 - Most internships pay similar to summer jobs with the option of paying hourly or on a stipend arrangement.
- What requirements and experience will you want of your intern(s), academically and professionally?
 - Keep in mind that intern are generally new to the workforce and may not have much experience. Even topics such as office etiquette may need to be addressed. With that being said, do not be afraid to set standards for the intern.
- What ongoing training will you provide?
 - Including the intern in professional development opportunities and events such as staff meetings, conferences, trade shows, employee training programs and company social activities can enhance the intern's view of the internship as well as help the intern grow professionally.
 - Preparing an organized rotation schedule for the intern is a great way to ensure the internship program provides varied learning. By rotating the intern through various departments such as marketing, sales, finance, and technical applied tasks, the intern is exposed to different aspects of the business.
 - If you chose to have a rotating internship program, each department should designate a supervisor for the intern to report to.

Internship Supervisor: It is crucial to select an internship supervisor who will be responsible for the intern's everyday supervision. The supervisor should be willing to commit their time and efforts to mentoring the intern and help them grow professionally.

- The intern must be knowledgeable of who to report to in case questions, concerns or issues arise during the internship. The supervisor should clearly state their role to the student prior to the start of the internship.

Attract interns: When recruiting an intern, it is best to contact the internship coordinator or advisor within the Department of Horticultural Sciences (see the contact information below) and considering posting an announcement on the Aggies for Hire website at <http://aggies-for-hire.tamu.edu/>.

- Timeliness is essential when recruiting horticulture students. Many students only take internships during the summer, therefore recruiting during January to March is best.
- Career fairs and club meetings are great ways to speak to students – on campus interviews can be arranged. See below for career fair information.

Texas A&M Department of Horticultural Sciences internship agreement form: The Department of Horticultural Sciences requires an internship agreement between the supervisor, the student/intern, and the departmental Internship Coordinator. This is required to ensure that the student and employer understand and agree on what is expected of the internship.

- At the completion of the internship, a student evaluation is required from the supervisor to help the student and the Department understands what is needed to better prepare students for future professional roles.

One final note: Word of mouth is a powerful tool for recruiting. “Good internship programs are a fantastic way to recruit new managers. Bad internship programs can result in a really ugly company image that will hinder recruitment of college students for years to come.”

Texas A&M Career Fairs

Agriculture Career Exposition (ACE Day)
Biannually, Mid-February and mid-October

Horticulture Career Fair,
Annually, Last Wednesday in February

For more visit:

<http://careercenter.tamu.edu/events/careerfairs.cfm>

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