



Designing A Successful Internship Program

Interns provide an avenue to identify and evaluate potential full-time professional hires for your organization. More importantly, internship experiences are a valuable learning opportunity - helping students develop academically, professionally and personally. Building an internship program with Wisconsin School of Business students will provide a flexible, cost-effective labor force without requiring a long-term employer commitment. Your company's visibility also will be increased on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus through the advertising and hiring of an intern.



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“At the University of Wisconsin, Procter & Gamble has consistently found well-rounded internship candidates that successfully make meaningful contributions to our business during their internships. Many of these interns have returned to P&G for successful long-term careers. As a promote from within company, we place very high importance on internships as a key talent pipeline, and Wisconsin is one of the schools we look to as we identify future leaders.”

Amy Harding

Associate Director, Consumer & Market Knowledge
Procter & Gamble



International Students Make Great Interns

International students possess excellent skills that make them competitive candidates in the hiring process. These desirable characteristics include living and work experience in other countries, global and unique perspectives and oftentimes bilingual communication skills. Most international students attending UW-Madison have an F-1 student visa, which permits them to work in their industry part-time and during summer months. **The only additional steps required to hire an international student intern that pertains to their VISA is to sign the student's CPT (Curricular Practical Training) paperwork, confirming their employment with your organization.** For questions on this process, please feel free to contact BBA Career Services or [UW-Madison International Student Services](#) office.

What is an Internship?

Internships generally are a one-time work experience related to the intern's academic major. Internships are a balance between the interns "real-world" learning and the specific work you are seeking. An internship may be paid or unpaid, although, the Wisconsin BBA Program encourages paid internships.

Who should you hire?

Base your internship hiring on the academic background and skills that you determine are needed. Identify previous experiences you seek in an intern. Choose your interns as if you were hiring a full-time employee. Through career programming, Wisconsin School of Business students are well prepared to take on real-world assignments.

When should you hire an intern?

The most common time for business internships is during the summer months when students are most readily available. If your company location is close to the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, a semester part-time internship may also glean talented students. Semester-long internships are also an option.

Internship for Credit

The Wisconsin School of Business offers business students two options for receiving credit for an internship. General Business 450 provides internship credit for summer or part-time semester internships. General Business 451 provides internship credit for extended internships and Co-op experiences. Both courses are online and one-credit. To receive credit for an internship, a student must obtain administrator approval. Contact Whitney Baker at whitney.baker@wisc.edu for questions about these courses.

How do internships benefit the organization?

Interns will bring a fresh perspective to resolving old problems. An internship program, whether it is the typical 10-week summer program, or an alternate timeframe, can serve as a pipeline for your full-time Wisconsin School of Business hires as you "grow your own" talent. The internship is a time to evaluate the intern's success as a potential full-time employee and determine how well the intern fits within your organization.

Following the internship, the students return to campus and can serve as your ambassadors allowing your organization to have exposure on campus throughout the academic year. In this role, students are able to reach out to other University of Wisconsin-Madison students and student organizations in a way that is not easily accessible to you. The student can become your organization's eyes and ears, providing you with an ongoing pulse on our campus!

How do you build a successful internship program?



Be honest with what work will be involved. Be sure to provide Wisconsin BBA Career Services with a complete position description so there is no ambiguity of what work will be performed.

Offer interns real-world work assignments related to their academic preparedness.

Interns want to work and learn. An intern from the Wisconsin School of Business can help you complete a job and provide a new perspective when approaching a project so it makes sense to present interns with work where they will be challenged.

Be there to welcome the intern on their first day.

Be prepared for your intern's arrival by having a staff person assigned to welcome the intern to your organization.

Supply the intern with the tools and training to get the job done.

It is imperative to have a designated place for the intern to work, with all the essential tools to complete their assigned work and to also provide any specific training that may be required to ensure success.

Provide orientations for all involved.

Provide an orientation that includes managers, mentors, and others who will be interacting with the intern. An orientation will ensure everyone understands what the expectations are and what the intern's role will be.

Supply interns with a guide or information online.

Provide a reference guide with answers to what you know will be frequently asked questions. Include a list of your organization's policies to allow interns to have an easily accessible reference document.

Find housing and provide relocation assistance.

Offer assistance to housing expenses, or if that is not feasible, offer assistance in locating housing for the intern that is affordable and in a safe location. Share the contact information of other interns that you are hiring in advance, so students have the option of sharing living expenses.

Consider flex-time or other work arrangements.

Keeping Wisconsin School of Business students on as a part-time employee when they return to school to serve as your liaison, or hiring the student back over school breaks, are both excellent avenues to build a stronger relationship with the intern and to increase your visibility on campus.

Provide a mentor or consider the option to hire an intern manager if you have several interns to oversee.

Interns should have a "go-to" person. Assign a supervisor or mentor to provide guidance and their time for the intern. This will ensure your internship program runs smoothly and the interns have the guidance they will need for success.

Promote team involvement.

Have your staff members become involved with the interns that are hired to orient the interns to the company culture. Staff members can become servers at intern picnics, drivers for social events such as ball games, or hosts at other intern events. Get everyone at your organization, from all levels, involved in the intern's experience.

Provide interns with ongoing feedback.

Remember, interns are students and the internship is an educational experience. Provide constructive feedback, as well as positive reinforcement to the intern on an ongoing basis to keep the intern engaged and to indicate their work is valued by your organization.

Include interns in the daily life of the workplace.

Interns want to be included too. When possible, invite interns to quietly tag along to a staff or a project meeting to increase the intern's knowledge of your organization's big picture. This gesture will help show how the intern's work fits into the grand scheme. Occasionally invite the intern to lunch with colleagues as a good way to keep the intern included in the daily life of your organization and its employees.

Support new-hire panels.

Interns relate to new hires and find new hires to be excellent, credible source of information. Typically, new hire panels consist of three to six people who were hired by your organization within the last two to three years. The panel members provide a brief summary of their background and then are available to answer the intern's questions, providing insight into your organization. The new hire panels are an excellent option to showcase your organization as a great place to work.

Utilize your company's executives for speaking events.

Interns interpret having access to successful professionals in their related major as a definite benefit of an internship. Choose executives from your organization to the interns able to provide relevant information in a personable way and who are willing to spend some time to answer questions and, if possible, meet informally with the interns.

Hold focus groups or conduct surveys.

Hold intern focus groups or conduct a survey to gather information on how the intern has viewed the experience. The information learned can help you enhance future internships.

Present training opportunities and encourage outside classes.

Provide your interns with access to in-house training on work-related skills, such as a particular computer program, or general skills, such as time management, as a great way to show the interns that you are interested in their development. If you do not have in-house training, provide interns with information about nearby community colleges. If your budget allows, consider paying for the intern to take a class, or paying part of the tuition for courses the intern may want to take while working at your organization.

Illustrate intern work through presentations.

Successful interns work hard completing their internship and are proud of what they have accomplished. Permitting the interns to present their work through formal presentations will allow the intern to demonstrate achievements and help showcase the internship program to all staff members.

Perform exit interviews.

An exit interview is another valuable way to collect immediate feedback on the intern's experience and if expectations were met. It also is a good way to assess the intern's level of interest in returning as an intern on college breaks or coming back as a full-time hire. Having the intern fill out an exit survey to bring to the exit interview will provide structure to the conversation. If a real-time, face-to-face, exit interview is not possible, a follow up telephone interview is another option. It is important to garner the intern's experience beyond a completed online survey.

Excerpts from:

"Building a Premier Internship Program: A Practical Guide for Employers"
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Need Help?

Contact a BBA Employer Relations Team member to answer your internship questions and to assist you in designing a customized intern program that is right for your organization.

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