

Tips for Starting 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.

Creating a program: When outlining an internship program it is helpful to decide what you want the program to accomplish, both for the company and for 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
 - Key details of the internship including 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 so providing housing or offering assistance can be a major recruiting bonus.
- How much are you willing to pay your intern?
 - Most internships pay similar to the rates for summer jobs.
- What requirements and experience will you require academically and professionally?
 - Keep in mind that interns are generally new to the workforce and may not have much experience. Be sure to outline expectations for interns.
- What ongoing training will you provide during the internship?
 - Including the intern in professional development opportunities and events like conferences, trade shows, employee training programs and company social activities can enhance the intern's experience.
 - 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.

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 time and effort to mentoring the intern and helping her or him to grow professionally.

- The intern needs to be knowledgeable of whom to report to in case questions, concerns, or other issues arise during the internship. This should be outlined with the intern *prior* to the start of the internship.

Finding an Intern:

Texas A&M University's Department of Horticultural Sciences maintains a free job site for horticulture-related jobs and internships. Be sure to take advantage of this resource and post your internship position(s) on Aggies for Hire, <http://aggies-for-hire.tamu.edu/>.

- Remember, time is of the essence when recruiting horticulture students. Many students can only complete internships during the summer, so begin recruiting in January - March for best results.
- Career Fairs and departmental club meetings are great ways to speak to students and on-campus interviews can be arranged. Visit <http://hortsciences.tamu.edu> for information on student clubs, Career Fair, and other helpful 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 intern and the Department to better prepare students for future professional roles.

A 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 Department of Horticultural Sciences Career Fair:

Annually, Held on the last Wednesday each February

<http://hortsciences.tamu.edu/career-fair/>

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