



# Tips on Developing a Strong Internship Program

## **INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The first consideration is to identify possible cooperative education/internship opportunities in your organization. Then, develop a job description & and criteria for eligibility.

## **DEVELOPING A JOB DESCRIPTION**

### *SECTION 1*

Brief paragraph about the organization/department: mission, size, customers, summary of role of position within unit, etc.

- Gives context of position (helpful for classification and advertising position)

### *SECTION 2*

Major functional areas with estimated percentages of time, including specific responsibilities in each of those areas.

- it is primarily the text of the job description that will determine the intern's role in your organization
  - nature of work
  - the variety (scope and range of responsibility) and the difficulty of the work (judgment, skill, knowledge, technical complexities, etc.)

### *SECTION 3*

Qualifications (include desired experience, special educational or technical training, skills, or knowledge, physical requirements, and special notes about schedule, work locations, field work, etc.)

## **MENTOR**

When developing a co-op/internship program, designate a company representative or mentor as the person responsible for the student. In smaller organizations it could be the immediate supervisor; in larger organizations someone from human resources or the department hiring the intern could fill the role. Increasingly many large organizations are hiring full-time internship coordinators to recruit and manage the internship program.

This individual will have responsibility for the development and direction of the experience throughout the company or department. They act as the liaison between the company and Montana State University Billings. Close attention must be given to the selection of persons chosen to provide direct supervision of the student. Emphasis should be on placing co-op/internship students under supervisors who can see their roles as "educators" as well as supervisors.

Providing a mentor for the interns can be very helpful in developing the intern's skills and dedication to your organization. The mentor should be someone who the intern can comfortably talk to about the organization, ask questions, discuss concerns and other issues. The mentor should provide valuable advice, support, and training to the intern to ensure their academic and professional growth.

## **WORK ASSIGNMENTS**

Fulfilling recruiting needs involves more than just determining the number of co-op/internship students required. It also involves the development of specific job requirements for each type of position. It is useful to prepare a short job description summarizing the requirements for each position the company plans to fill.

A successful co-op or internship program should provide the student with a sequence of planned activities. The effectiveness of the total program hinges, to a large extent, on how effectively co-op/internship students are trained and used.

Alternating work assignments can be important to the success of the program. Rotation from one assignment to another gives co-op students a sample of the types of work performed in the organization. In turn, it provides supervisors with an indication of the kind of work the students are best equipped to perform following graduation.

Discussing the organization's mission, goals and needs with the student and how they relate to the internship can be very helpful. Giving an intern meaningful work assignments are critical to the success of your organization's internship program.

## **ORIENTATION**

When bringing in a new intern, it is important that he/she is introduced to the organization and given an orientation. This may include a briefing on the mission, culture, rules, regulations and expectations of the organization, meeting key personnel in the first week, and other relevant items. This will give the intern a better understanding of the organization and their role in its success.

## **EVALUATION**

To help the interns learn and develop it is recommended they receive evaluations that monitor their performance, areas of strength, areas needing improvement and other issues related to their specific job duties. These evaluations will assist the intern in their career and personal development.

*\* The Organization agrees that no student will be denied work or subjected to different treatment under this Contract on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age or sex.*

**For questions contact:**

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