



Life IN A BOX

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2025

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Welcome To Campus ROC's Internship In A Box.

This guide is designed for employers who want to revamp their internship program or build one from scratch. We know the task can seem daunting. But we present clear, actionable steps to help you operate a successful internship program — one that adds value to your organization, helps build your talent pipeline, promotes and actively encourages diversity and inclusion in your organization, and improves your organization's brand as an employer of choice.





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The Co-Op Perspective:

“My experience at L3Harris has been exceptional. Granted, many people in my location work from home. I have still been able to meet with plenty of engineers whether it be in person or not and everyone here is incredibly friendly, smart, and helpful to me as a co-op student. I was able to get my co-op extended throughout the fall semester and I can’t wait to see what cool projects I get to work on this fall.”

Trevor Povlock | Mechanical Engineering Major, Rochester Institute of Technology

Co-Op Vs. Internship: Know the Difference

Employers often interchange the titles of co-op and internship – but there are key differences! Most colleges in the Greater Rochester region provide student internship opportunities; select institutions, such as RIT, also offer robust co-op opportunities.” Cooperative education, or co-op, is full-time, paid, significant work experience in a professional setting. Directly related to their field of study, co-op helps students apply what they learned in the classroom into meaningful work experience. Students work 35 to 40 hours per week, dedicating 12 to 32 weeks of hands-on experience with the employer. Co-op students benefit from committing a full-time schedule to their employer as co-op is embedded in their academic program, tuition-free. Students can gain practical employment experience with co-op employers across the U.S. and overseas.

Internships are often thought about as a summer experience, but they can also be done throughout the school year. They can be part-time or full-time and are designed to provide real-life work experiences, ideally in the intern’s field of study. If an internship is completed during the semester, students still take classes and balance their internship responsibilities with schoolwork. Generally, internships have more flexibility as students can complete them over several semesters or in the summer. If the internship is unpaid, the student should earn academic credit per Federal Labor Standards Act unless you are a non-profit organization. Ideally, because the student is paying tuition to earn academic credit, internships are paid at least minimum wage.

For simplification, throughout this resource we use the words “intern” and “internships” with the intention that the guide is also designed for the co-op, work study or other related programs that connect students to employers.

The Virtual Internship

Virtual Internships are done online or remotely anytime of the year. Similarly to in-person internships, students are placed with a company and report to a supervisor. Interns are in regular contact with the supervisor/team via virtual methods such as video call, phone call, email and instant messenger. Due to its ease of use, technology has opened up greater opportunities for virtual internships. Some advantages of a virtual internship include flexible work hours for the intern and a greater talent pool for the employer. Virtual internships are most successful with frequent supervision and guidance. Virtual interns should be as fully integrated into the team as an in-person intern.



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The Internship Manager Perspective:

“Over several years Constellation Brands has been able to develop a ‘best in class’ Internship program. Our leaders look forward to interacting with our interns to give each student a meaningful experience, while our interns explore Constellation Brands as a potential future employer; bringing a fresh perspective to our culture, our brands and our workplace.”

Mark A. Brown | Manager, Acquisition and University Relations

Greater Rochester's Talent Edge

The battle for young talent has increased and employers in Greater Rochester are poised to win. A Greater Rochester Enterprise study found that Rochester, New York is #3 in the nation for college degrees per capita. We are first in the nation for degrees in STEM programs, including the physical sciences and mathematics,

among large metropolitan areas of one million or more residents. In Greater Rochester, there are 19 colleges and universities, 81,000 students and 19,000 graduates per year. Additionally, Rochester, New York is in the top ten list of the most concentrated millennial markets in the nation.

10 Internship Benefits For Your Business

- ① Build strong relationships with upcoming talent.
- ② Develop positive connections with students as they return to campus.
- ③ Get feedback on work and projects from a new audience.
- ④ Test the potential of a new position.
- ⑤ Actively promote and encourage diversity in your organization.
- ⑥ Complete more projects.
- ⑦ Help employees develop management skills as intern supervisors.
- ⑧ Bring fresh eyes and ideas to long-standing challenges.
- ⑨ Get the latest industry information directly from the classroom.
- ⑩ Treat the internship as a job interview for a full-time position.



Building A Great Internship Program

GETTING INTERNAL BUY-IN

Employee support

- Recruit non-HR business leaders and team members to champion the development of an internship program. This makes it seem less of an “HR mandated” program.
- Ensure that projects and experiences are readily available to make the internship a positive experience. Poll employees to identify their level of interest in having an intern and ask them where they think an intern could be most useful and productive.
- Hold a focus group with employees to get a better understanding of their intern needs and what abilities/skills/knowledge an intern should possess to ensure a good ROI for the company.
- Create a process for requesting an intern. Ask employees to identify key attributes and qualifications, like specific majors, systems experience (MS Office, Excel, Salesforce), and/or prior work experience. Senior leadership engagement.
- Develop experiences for the intern that expose them to leaders in the company. Examples could be a lunch and learn with members from different branches of the company. This provides an exciting educational opportunity for the intern, and allows the student to discover new careers and fields of interest within the organization. It's also a great way for senior leadership to meet the intern, make a positive contribution to the internship program, and feel personally invested in its success.



Getting To Work

The best internships start with good preparation

- Draft a job description that includes projects the intern will be working on.
- Identify the team and the supervisor the intern will be working with at the company.
- Clarify the hours, compensation, and evaluation the intern should expect.

Goals & Measurement

Before you begin your internship description, consider what your organization's goals are and how you will measure success. Ask yourself:

- Do I want to convert graduating interns to full-time employees?
- Do I need assistance with a particular project?
- Is there an area of expertise interns could bring to my organization we do not currently have?

“ The Human Resources Perspective:

“Internship programs are an excellent way for students to connect learning objectives from the classroom to a practical environment. With an internship at Paychex, students are empowered to be collaborative with employees, be responsible for contributing to meaningful yet challenging work, and be curious as they expand their professional network. Investing in internships and early talent hiring has allowed Paychex to build a high-quality talent pipeline with diverse ideas for our future.”

Laurie Zaucha | VP Human Resources & Organizational Development



Resources

**NOW THAT YOU KNOW
WHAT YOU HOPE TO GAIN,
DO YOU HAVE WHAT YOU
NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL?**

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The CEO Perspective:

“The interns who have worked at ESL have been key contributors to our culture and help make us a Great Place to Work. We make sure to provide the students who want to intern at ESL a variety of opportunities so multiple departments throughout the organization can experience the benefits of the knowledge and work ethic the students bring to the workplace. Throughout the years of our internship program, we have seen many students develop into full-time, long-term employees who excel in their positions. The time and investment both we and the students make in each other helps to ensure we are building a collaborative, passionate workforce that will continue ESL's growth long into the future.”

Faheem Masood | President and CEO, ESL Federal Credit Union



Internship Descriptions

Like all job listings, internship descriptions should clearly state the company background, culture, goals of the position, scope of work, hours, pay, and necessary skills. If you require specific coursework or majors that should be included as well. Be sure to note any opportunities for interns to work on something innovative for your company. Those kind of projects are a big plus and will make you a more appealing employer. Also list any other perks like free lunch on Fridays, access to the gym, or special discounts on summer housing.

Money

The cost of an internship program can vary greatly. Some organizations offer housing assistance for interns, competitive salaries, and perks. Other organizations provide unpaid internships with limited or no company benefits. CampusROC strongly advocates for paid internships for reasons that benefit both the intern and the employer. Here are some typical paid internship structures

- Summer intern stipends can vary from \$1,000 to \$3,000.
- An hourly rate for interns ranges from \$10 to \$20 depending on the experience and skill of the intern.
- According to NACE's 2018 Guide to Compensation for Interns and Co-ops, the average hourly wage for an intern is \$18.73.



Staff

Identify an Internship Coordinator

- It is helpful to have an internship coordinator if your organization is recruiting many interns for various staff and departments. This person organizes the recruiting and onboarding process and matches interns to their projects, departments, and direct supervisors. Identify a Mentor, Supervisor, and Project Team.
- A mentor acts as the “intern buddy.” They will be the intern’s go-to source for questions ranging from “can I ask someone from another team for advice on a project?” to “is there a good lunch spot nearby?” The mentor can be the supervisor, fellow team member, or simply a longtime employee.
- The supervisor is the intern’s boss, assigning work and monitoring progress. Regular feedback and structured evaluations can help the intern understand their strengths and the areas that need improvement, promoting growth during the internship.
- The project team is comprised of the people the intern will work with the most. The best intern experiences fully integrate interns into a team. Ensure that your organization is fostering an environment that promotes intern engagement and inclusion throughout the workplace.

MEASURING IMPACT

- **Conversions:** How many interns were offered and accepted full-time positions after the internship?
- **Ambassadors:** Will interns recommend this internship to fellow students when they are back on campus?
- **Projects:** Did the projects identified at the beginning of the internship get completed?
- **Expertise:** Did my staff or organization adopt a new practice or skill as a result of the internship?
- **Evaluation:** Did the student report having a positive experience upon exiting the internship? What recommendations did they have to improve the program in the future?

Selection & Hiring

Many of the students you recruit as interns will have limited or no professional work experience. Typically their background includes part-time employment, campus activities, and athletic or academic achievements. as a result here are a few things to look for:

- **Campus Involvement:** A student who is involved with extracurricular activities on campus likely has good organization and time management skills. They also demonstrate an ability to work in groups.
- **Leadership Roles:** Strong social skills, team-work, and self-confidence are all features of students who have leadership roles on their resume. Look for roles like orientation leader, resident assistant, or student tutor.
- **Academic Performance and Coursework:** Grade point average does not tell the entire story of any student, but if there is coursework they have completed that is relevant to your industry, it is good to know that students performed well in those courses. In addition to, or even instead of GPA, ask about performance and projects in courses that you think are applicable to the internship at hand.
- **Prior Work Experience:** Many potential student interns do not have professional experience. But you can look past a job title to see what skills are needed for that job and how they might translate to your internship position; a strong social media presence indicates an aptitude for digital marketing; retail experience indicates good customer service skills; camp counselors are good motivators and organizers.





Promote Inclusion

Internships can be an effective tool for including individuals of all abilities in your organization. Research shows that employers who offer internships for people with disabilities are 4.5 times more likely to hire a person with a disability than those who do not. According to Forbes Magazine, “By focusing on inclusion directly in your internship program, you can be sure to cultivate a diverse workforce. Even better, you can establish a company culture where differences are acknowledged and valued.” In 2020, Policy Link found that people of color make up over one-third of the workforce and women make up nearly half. By actively fostering diversity in your intern pool, your company can start to build a strong foundation for creating a more diverse workforce.

Onboarding

Your interns may be new to an office environment and they will certainly be new to your workplace culture. Your goal in onboarding interns is to introduce them to your organization, how it operates, and what culture drives it, so that interns can adapt, meet your expectations, and excel in their roles. Here are some steps for successfully onboarding interns.



“ The Internship Perspective:

“A great internship is one that provides the student with the opportunity to develop their professional skills and build connections throughout the organization. The best internships pair the student with a mentor that will guide them during their time at the company. I keep in touch with my past mentors and often reach out to them for professional advice. At each of my internships, I have had the chance to build longlasting relationships and pick up skills that have helped me feel prepared to enter my field.”

Emmarae Stein | Senior Communications and History Major, Nazareth College

Before They Start

- Be clear when hiring about the start and end date for the internship and include the number of hours/days worked each week.
- Is the student counting the internship for academic credit? If so, review their school's requirements in providing credit and schedule time to fulfill their requests.
- Explain the company's dress code.
- Identify a work space for the intern and consider the supplies they will need: computer, phone, company email address, and building ID card.
- Determine specific projects that your intern will be working on.
- Outline work expectations for your intern and create metrics for measuring intern success.

When They Arrive

- Give your intern a tour of your organization and introduce them to other staff.
- Discuss operation procedures such as clocking-in, requesting time-off, absences, and overtime rules.
- Provide a one-sheet of key contacts (IT, HR, supervisor, important clients or partners, etc.).
- Provide an overview of the company culture. What are the unwritten rules of your organization? Are first names used for everyone or are some people Mr/Ms/Dr? Is it acceptable to bring a cell phone to a meeting to take notes or keep track of time?
- Review projects, expectations, and timeframes and how success for the intern will be measured.
- Schedule times throughout the course of the internship to check in with the intern and evaluate their progress.

Retention

A goal for many organizations is to convert their interns into full-time employees. Even those who can not plan for full-time hiring may want to bring a successful intern back during the semester or the following summer.

Making The Offer

Timing is important. Ideally you want to make a full-time or continued offer as a student concludes an internship and heads back to campus. Your organization's ability to make the offer at this time will depend on the availability of positions you have and the timing of student's graduation dates. By having an offer to the student as they return to campus they are able to leave on a high note and you have the chance to secure a new employee.

Following Up

In the space between when an offer is accepted and the start of the position, you can continue to build a strong relationship with your candidate: send a few emails, a "care package" during finals, or ask them to represent your company at a campus information session. The key is to find non-intrusive ways to let your candidate know that you are thinking of them and are eager to have them be part of the team.

Putting It Together

Do you wish someone would guide you through the internship process? CampusROC has your back! CampusROC partners with the career services professionals from our 19 regional colleges and universities to engage and retain students through campus visits, info sessions, and posting internships on our job boards. This gives you direct access to great talent right from our home-area campuses. As a nonprofit that collaborates with regional employers, higher education institutions, and city and regional civic leaders, we're your one-stop shop to building your talent pipeline and your business!

FAQS

How Do I Know If I Need An Intern?

Many different types of organizations – large, small, nonprofit, for-profit, technical, non-technical – benefit from internship programs. Talk to managers in your company to assess your needs. Do you have a specific project, task, or research work that an intern could contribute to? Would a new, fresh perspective boost an area of your organization? Do you have a technical need, such as updating your website? Would any employees be more productive if they had some assistance?

Do I Need To Pay An Intern?

Yes, but not all interns are paid an hourly wage. As you are determining the resources needed for your internship program, be sure to explore all options. Some employers choose to offer a stipend or a scholarship to cover the cost of a credited internship. There are legal considerations if you are not paying your interns which your company's lawyer should be consulted on.

Do I Have To Provide Health Care For Interns?

No, most students are covered by their parents' or guardians' health care plans or they obtain it through their schools.

How Long Are Internships?

Typically, internships last 10 to 12 weeks and run on the same timeline as semesters: fall (August through December), spring (January through May), and summer (May through August). However, your internship program can be customized to fit your needs. For example, if you have a two-month project that calls for additional help, search for interns who want to work in that timeline.

Where Do I Go For More Help?

Contact **Barb Egenhofer** | Director, Talent Strategy – ROC2025
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Photos by City of Rochester Communications Bureau.

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