

**CAREER PATH INTERNSHIP (CPI) PROGRAM  
DEVELOPING WORK ACTIVITIES  
AND  
MEASURABLE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

A large part of producing effective position descriptions involves the development of challenging work assignments that complement students' academic programs. One way to do this is to design a preliminary list of work activities that will fit the needs of your department. A detailed description of typical tasks will help the college to promote your internship or field experience, and to screen the right candidates for the position. Later, when the interns you select join your team, you will have a chance to review the work activities and modify them according to the interns' knowledge and personal work/learning goals.

**As part of the educational process, internship work activities should focus on projects specifically related to the academic major and the degree the interns expect to receive. Students who perform menial tasks will become quickly demoralized and will learn nothing about applying their expertise to a business environment.** While many students work (or have worked) at part-time jobs to finance their education, an internship does not fall into the category of a job. It should be viewed as part of their academic program and should offer every opportunity to link classroom learning to workplace experience.

**Many students expect and appreciate clear direction regarding what is expected of them and frequent feedback concerning what and how they have done. In their academic environment, clear direction and periodic feedback is the way of life.** It is also important that the interns perceive their work is making a useful contribution to the sponsoring department or organization.

A particular concern is that the work assignments provide the interns with a variety of tasks, while accommodating the needs of the department or organization. Of course, some of the interns' responsibilities will involve repetition, because all work involves some repeated activity. We are suggesting, however, the program be designed to maximize the scope of the students' departmental or organizational experience.

Sample tasks that undergraduate students have provided for their sponsoring departments or organizations include the following:

- Performing laboratory tests
- Writing handbooks or manuals
- Designing posters, charts, graphs
- Generating financial forecasts and cost recovery reports
- Performing software/hardware modifications
- Conducting studies and surveys
- Developing slide/sound presentations
- Compiling technical reports
- Creating academic lesson plans
- Conducting research
- Generating marketing plans
- Conducting training packets
- Preparing budgets and financial reports

Developing challenging work assignments relative to the students' abilities is a major thrust of the position description. Your final internship or field experience description will incorporate the needs of your department or organization as well as the abilities and academic goals of the students you employ.

**KEY POINTS:**

- Describe challenging, but realistic tasks students can accomplish within a two-semester period.
- Work with faculty to establish specific learning objectives for students.
- Identify outcomes or expect products.
- Be willing to incorporate the students' particular strengths
- Show how this work relates to the overall efforts of the department or organization

**SUPERVISING THE INTERN**

As the intern supervisor, you use all the skills necessary in any effective supervisory relationship:

- **Providing leadership**
- **Motivating**
- **Delegating**
- **Communicating**
- **Developing and training**
- **Evaluating**

Additionally, the students will look to you as a mentor who will assist their transition from the classroom to the work environment. Since the internship is an extension of the learning process, you will need to provide opportunities to bridge the two experiences.

We suggest that you meet with your interns regularly to provide feedback concerning their performance. During these meetings, the students can:

- **Report on the status of a project**
- **Ask questions**
- **Learn how their work is contributing to the department/organization**
- **Participate in an evaluation of their strengths**
- **Discuss areas needing growth and development**
- **Get a sense of what kind of work lies ahead**

At the same time, you will have an opportunity to coach, counsel and reinforce positive attitudes and performance.

You should anticipate some interaction with the CPI Program staff through telephone calls, email communication, and online surveys and evaluations. The CPI program staff encourages all supervisors to work with the intern to try to resolve any issues that may arise. However, CPI Program staff are here to help you find a solution if difficulties cannot be resolved (intern attendance or punctuality problems, low motivation, unsatisfactory work, or personal conflicts). You should get in touch with the CPI program staff if the following internship changes need to occur: change in supervisors, a significant change in the internship duties, the intern changes majors, or termination is required.

Encourage your interns to keep a portfolio of work accomplished during their experience. Keeping a weekly “internship journal” is a great way for students to track their internship accomplishments. In addition, it provides an opportunity for discussion of how both the intern and the internship progressed. Specific work documents to include in a portfolio or internship journal could include:

Job Descriptions	Charts/Graphs	Survey Reports
Proposals	Correspondence	Cost Analyses
Manuals	Press Releases	Computer Printouts
Citations & Awards	Certificates	Program Outlines
Contracts	Financial Reports	Research Report
Company Newsletters	Displays & Exhibits	Marketing Material
Performance Appraisals	References	Office Memos

#### **KEY POINTS:**

- Maintain an open channel of communication with formal and informal meetings.
- Keep the interns busy and directed towards their learning objectives. *Students rarely complain of overwork, but they do complain if they are not challenged.*
- Provide opportunities for increasing responsibility.
- Encourage professionalism by assisting the interns in developing human relations skill, decision-making abilities, and managing office politics.
- Remember that you are a role model.
- Develop connections.

#### **NOTES:**