RVA INTERNSHIPS:
KEEPING OUR COLLEGE TALENT IN RVA

A collaboration of RVA colleges & the Greater Richmond Chamber
I. Why Internships?

What is an internship?
An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Students gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; employers have the opportunity to guide, train, and evaluate talent.

Internships may be:
- Two to nine months in duration
- A part time or full-time commitment
- Paid or unpaid opportunities
- Connected or not connected to an educational program with academic credit

Unlike an internship, a summer job does not:
- Connect classroom and workplace based learning
- Focus on project-based work
- Train and evaluate candidates for future career opportunities

How do interns help my organization?
- Build a talent pipeline
- Evaluate the quality of candidates
- Improve retention rates
- Are cost-effective
- Raise the profile of your organization to potential employees
- Help your organization stay competitive in the marketplace

How can I obtain support for internships in my organization?
- Ensure your program is aligned with your organization’s business strategy
- Engage company leaders who were brought on board through college recruiting and feature their stories
- Document the value of the program with metrics, such as quality of hire, success rate of hires, if hires are promoted, retention, and overall performance

Adapted from “The Case for College Relations and Recruiting in 2012”: http://www.nacweb.org/j022012/university-recruiting-college-relations/.
II. Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program

Set goals and policies for the internship program
- What does your organization hope to gain from your internship program?
- How does the internship align with your organization’s overall strategy?
- Do you want an intern for a specific project or would you rather give them a taste of everything your organization does?
- How many interns are needed?
- In what time periods are interns needed- Summer (May-August), Fall (September-December), Spring (January-April)?

Write a plan for the internship opportunity
Consider:
- What will the intern do?
- What qualifications will you seek in an intern?
- Who will be the intern’s primary supervisor?
- Will you pay the intern?
- Where will you put the intern?
- When will the internship take place?
- Do you want to plan a program beyond the work the intern will do, such as professional development, networking, or training opportunities? YRichmond, a program of the Greater Richmond Chamber encompasses all of these things and defines what it means to live the RVA lifestyle. To learn more CLICK HERE.
- Write a description of the internship opportunity that clearly describes the duties and expectations.

Recruit a qualified intern and openly discuss expectations
- Begin your recruitment 3-4 months before you want the intern to begin. The earlier you begin, the more access you will have to the most competitive candidates.
- Utilize any RVA college or university alumni at your organization to reach out and brand your program.
- Visit campus and host an information session, speak to a class, or an on-campus organization affiliated to your industry (i.e. Accounting Club).
- Arrange interviews in a timely manner—3-5 days after the application deadline. You may use the phone, Skype, conduct interviews on campus or at your office.
- Choose your interns just as carefully as you would choose permanent employees! Up to 45% of students stay on as full-time employees after graduation.
- Notify candidates as to their status.
II. Starting and Maintaining a Quality Internship Program

Manage the intern’s work and development

➤ Be sure to set expectations prior to the first day—what time should your intern arrive, where should they go, how should they dress?

➤ Orient your intern to the workplace. Give an overview of your organization, introduce him or her to co-workers, give a tour of the facilities. Explain who does what and what your intern’s responsibilities will be. Discuss how he or she will be evaluated.

➤ Give the intern the resources to be successful. Assign a desk with a computer and telephone. Show where supplies are kept and designate who can be asked questions.

➤ Supervise and mentor the intern. Don’t feel like you need to watch every move, but daily check-ins at first can avert problems later. Give detailed explanations, making sure he or she understands the task at hand and the associated timeline. Ask what questions your intern has. Making time to learn about his or her career goals, and sharing your own career journey will often add depth to your relationship.

➤ Give your intern feedback. Your intern does not know if he or she is meeting your expectations without your specific, constructive feedback. Make a regular time to review the work and guide the intern according to your expectations. Whether this is formal or informal is a matter of personal preference.

Conduct evaluations to continuously improve your program

➤ Evaluations at the end of the internship will provide your organization and your intern with helpful feedback. Be sure to ask your intern site evaluation questions related to your internship program goals so you know whether you have been successful in these areas.

➤ You may also want to conduct an in-person exit interview to gather more qualitative data about your intern’s experience.

➤ In addition to these measures, many internship programs calculate their “conversion rate”, that is the number of interns who are offered and accept full-time positions with your organization following graduation.
Department of Labor guidelines
There are some circumstances under which individuals who participate in “for-profit” private sector internships or training programs may do so without compensation. The following six criteria must be applied when making this determination:

- The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;
- The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;
- The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;
- The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;
- The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
- The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.


Academic credit for internships
Credit is awarded by academic departments for an academic component that ties students’ work experience to their curriculum. Students must seek approval from their department for academic credit. It is the department’s discretion whether they choose to award it. Not all students will be able to obtain academic credit for an internship experience—you will broaden your candidate pool by making this an optional element of your program.

### Market rates for intern pay:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Discipline</th>
<th>Employers reporting salary (#)</th>
<th>Average hourly salary</th>
<th>Hourly salary range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENGINEERING</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>$16.56</td>
<td>$6.25-$50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCOUNTING</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>$14.77</td>
<td>$6.50-$32.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL &amp; BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>$14.54</td>
<td>$5.00-$35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH SCIENCES</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>$14.28</td>
<td>$6.50-$50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>$13.41</td>
<td>$6.50-$30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGRICULTURE &amp; NATURAL RESOURCES</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>$13.41</td>
<td>$6.50-$30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL SCIENCE, HUMANITIES, COMMUNICATIONS &amp; MEDIA</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>$12.43</td>
<td>$6.50-$30.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Recruiting Trends 2013-2014, Michigan State University
IV. Frequently Asked Questions

**Legal issues**

**CREDIT AND PAY:** Even if a student is receiving academic credit in conjunction with the internship, the student still has the right to be paid under the Fair Labor Standards Act unless the company is not deriving any immediate advantage from the intern's work.

**EMPLOYMENT TERMS:** The employer may want to document in writing the terms and conditions of employment, including start and end dates, compensation, confidentiality, and job responsibilities.

**HARASSMENT:** If an intern is harassed at your organization and you take no action, your organization opens itself to the risk of lawsuits. Take time to advise your interns of appropriate workplace behavior, the organization's harassment policy, and the complaint procedure.

**WORKERS AND UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION:** Worker's compensation boards have found that interns contribute enough to a company to make them employees. It is wise to cover interns under your worker's compensation policy even though you are not required to do so. Student interns are not generally eligible for unemployment compensation at the end of an internship.

**International students**

Most international students who are applying for internship positions hold F-1 or J-1 visas.

An F-1 visa is granted to a person coming to the United States to attend a college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary, or other academic institution or language training program approved by the U.S Attorney General for study by foreign student. The visa holder plans to return home after completing studies. This is the most common non-immigrant visa for an international student attending undergraduate and graduate school. Students are granted F-1 status until the completion of the academic program and 12 months of post-program practical training. The purpose of the F-1 visa is to provide an opportunity for study in the United States. Anything outside of study, including employment, is an exception to the visa. Authorization for employment is strictly limited to certain situations.

- **Optional Practical Training:** This is temporary employment directly related to the student's major area of study that takes place after the student completes a full course of study. Authorization for this training may be granted for a maximum of 12 months of full-time or part-time work. Those on a student visa can only gain authorization once for this type of training.

*This information is adapted from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (reprinted with permission of the National Associated of Colleges and Employers, copyright holder). For more information on these and other legal issues, go to: www.naceweb.org or http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis.*