**INTERNSHIP PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES**

**Strategy and Planning**

* Ensure you have staff capacity to provide both supervision and mentorship to your interns.
* When possible, create internship opportunities that have a strong possibility of transitioning into permanent/full-time employment.
* Offer a range of opportunities that reflect the varied needs and timelines of your students, while meeting key functions in your organization.
  + Year-long opportunities: Recent college graduates and commuter college students are often looking for year-round opportunities that provide them with stable, ongoing work experience. This option is best for employers looking to hire recent graduates who are new to the workforce. *Note: Year-round internships are also a benefit to employers that are in growth phases with limited resources or during an economic downturn when it is often required to do more work with fewer staff and resources. Getting a jump start on your bench support, so that you are ready when it is time for full-time hires, presents an overall cost-savings along with the advantage of hiring someone that already understands your company.*
  + Semester-long opportunities: Many students participate in internships as a semester-long credit-bearing college course. Consider offering shorter-term, semester-based opportunities for these students. *Note: Often, these internships are paid for and coordinated by the intern’s college or university, which can help ease financial burdens and also strengthen employer relationships with local higher education institutions.*
  + Summer internships: For students who are unable to work and take classes at the same time, summer internships provide an opportunity for students to gain work experience while they have a break between semesters. *Note: Summer internships can be beneficial to employers because they broaden the talent pool – more students are able to take advantage of opportunities over the summer, and are able to focus more fully on their internship without having to juggle a full-time course load.*
* Prior to bringing someone on, identify definitive projects and assignments that you would like your intern to own or contribute to during their time with your company.

**Budgeting**

* We recommend that all interns are paid for their work, for a variety of reasons.
  + Many students rely on an income throughout the course of their education and can’t take unpaid positions that prevent them from working a paid job as well.
  + Paying interns is more equitable as it gives more students the opportunity to participate, regardless of their financial circumstances.
  + Paying interns makes them feel like a valuable part of the team, which makes them more inclined to do good, thorough work during their internship and more inclined to want to stay with the company after graduation.
  + Interns’ work should be meaningful and in that respect, they should be paid for it.
  + A paid intern is still a cost save compared to a full-time employee that receives benefits, a higher salary, etc.
* For more information about how to determine intern salaries, visit [this website](https://www.naceweb.org/talent-acquisition/internships/key-factors-to-consider-when-setting-intern-salaries/).
* In addition to interns’ salaries, take into account equipment costs, such as a laptop, cell phone and office supplies. Interns should be provided with the same equipment as a full-time employee.

**Experience**

* If you have multiple interns, create a cohort and provide space for your interns to get to know one another and share ideas. If you do not have a full cohort of interns, work with the Chamber, who can help make connections among other young professionals in the region.
* Provide your interns with mentorship opportunities, not just supervision. Connect them to leaders at your company and let them sit in on high-level meetings and conversations. Or, if confidentiality concerns prevent you from doing this, host a “lunch and learn” where an executive has lunch with the cohort and shares experiences.
* Give your interns meaningful work, and consider including a capstone project (an intern-driven, culminating project to close out their time at your organization, preferably something sustainable that you can use long-term even after the internship is over).
* Tangible projects that interns can own during their tenure at your company are beneficial to both the intern and the employer.
* Have interns present their projects/results to the rest of the team once completed.

**Partnerships**

* Internships should be a partnership between employers and education providers. The Chamber is happy to facilitate conversations and partnerships, provide support for students and employers, and make connections between internship opportunities and the students we serve.