



Norwalk Community College
**Cooperative Education
Internship Program**



Employer's Handbook

“Our NCC Co-op Intern has been a valuable asset to our company from “day one.” A self-directed professional, she is extremely knowledgeable about database design, architecture and procedures... and has accomplished significantly more than anticipated.”

**Patricia Marlin,
American Homeowners
Association**



Can internships meet hiring needs?

Through Cooperative Education, area employers hire highly motivated student workers who are nearing graduation and ready to launch a career. Interns work part-time or full-time for at least 12 weeks and earn a modest but competitive hourly wage. In some cases, students work on an unpaid basis.

Employers often view the 3-month internship as a trial-hire period. Students work hard to prove themselves and, as the internship draws to a close, employers choose whether to offer them a chance to stay on as temporary or permanent employees. There are also summer internships with pre-determined start and end dates, in which students provide vacation coverage and meet other short term needs.

What do interns learn?

Through internships, students apply classroom theory to real world situations. They acquire valuable skills, problem-solving strategies and a sense of how they fit in a profession or field. The insights they gain from experience are conveyed through faculty-assigned journals, papers or portfolios. In addition, the 8-week Co-op Seminar teaches communication skills, team building, stress management, and career planning. Students earn three credits and a grade for what they learn on the job and in the Seminar.

What benefits do internship programs offer to employers?

- All candidates are motivated beginners eager to prove themselves.
- No permanent hires until candidate is evaluated on the job.
- Colleges offer immediate access to resumes – employers save time and advertising.
- Recruiting costs are minimized– no placement fee
- Interns accept modest pay (\$10-20/hr) in exchange for experience
- Interns do not accumulate weeks toward an unemployment claim

Is an intern a good idea for my organization?

While hiring interns saves money, it requires an investment in time. Wise employers capitalize on the skills that interns offer, their “can-do” attitude and fresh ideas, but are realistic about the need for training.

The most important component of a successful internship is the availability of a dedicated supervisor. If your organization can provide a manager willing to offer a reasonable amount of consistent training and feedback, an internship makes good sense.

How much time does an intern take?

A well-planned internship requires only a modest amount of training time. In NCC’s 2002 survey of managers who had hired NCC interns, (response rate 12%)

- 19% reported providing very little to no training
- 62% reported providing a moderate amount of training
- 19% reported providing a lot of training but that it was worth the investment of time
- No manager reported that they were required to provide “too much” training



How can I get the most out of the internship arrangement?

- ***Design an internship that matters:*** Interns offer their best effort when it is clear that their work is important and not merely “busy work.”
- ***Clarify expectations:*** Write a job description that lists specific duties, sets reasonable expectations and clarifies reporting lines.
- ***Choose wisely.*** Interview candidates carefully and as thoroughly as you would for any position.
- ***Build in training:*** Assign a mentor or supervisor. Reward the mentor for providing consistent training.
- ***Treat the intern as a regular employee.*** Surveyed students said that they wanted to be considered part of a team of workers, and not as “the intern.”
- ***Provide feedback over the course of the internship, and particularly within the first month.*** Interns care about how well they are doing. Provide reassurance or redirection in a clear and direct verbal message early on.
- ***Model good communication techniques.*** Many interns lack experience with office or corporate culture. They sometimes avoid asking questions, leaving messages or joining in conversations for fear of making a mistake. Discuss how and why you use specific communication techniques.
- ***Provide a face-to-face evaluation at the end of the internship*** that is documented in a written evaluation. Most interns require a written evaluation to meet school requirements, but benefit the most from a one-on-one discussion of their progress, strengths and weaknesses.



What does NCC ask employers to do?

- Provide a written Job Description.
- Sign the Partnership Agreement. This one-page form describes the role of the employer, the student and the College.
- Provide a modest amount of training and consistent supervision for a work experience that consists of at least 135 hours.
- Provide a safe and healthy work environment.
- Participate in a Site Visit at your organization to discuss the intern's job responsibilities and learning goals, and to sign the student's Learning Plan.
- Meet the intern in a face-to-face evaluation session near the end of the internship, and complete NCC's one-page, check-box Employer's Evaluation Form.
- Contact the Co-op Office at **203-857-7281** if a problem arises.

Should Co-op interns be protected from harassment in the workplace?

Conscientious employers treat student workers, and all workers, with civility, and strive to establish an environment that prevents sexual, age, ethnic, racial or disability harassment on the job. Employers may learn more about legal aspects of sexual harassment policy by visiting: www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-sex.html.

This important subject is addressed in the Co-op Seminar. Students are told that they are not expected to tolerate harassment, and they are advised to report any harassment to their supervisors. Students learn also that if they participate in the harassment of a co-worker, they can expect to be dismissed from their internships.

QUESTIONS ABOUT HIRING AND COMPENSATION

Can interns stay on after the semester is over?

NCC Co-op interns with no work restrictions are free to accept offers of ongoing employment. While they are not obligated to accept these offers, most are eager to do so. As many as 80% of NCC interns continue at the Co-op site as temporary or permanent workers.

Can employers terminate a Co-op student before the internship ends?

Yes. An employer is under no obligation to continue employing a student who is unable or unwilling to meet job expectations. Problems of this nature are extremely rare; however, the NCC Cooperative Education Program asks employers to notify the program staff (203-857-7281) when problems arise and before any personnel action is taken.

How are unpaid internships viewed?

The Fair Labor Standards Act is generally interpreted to mean that unpaid student employment is allowable if the benefit to the student in the form of training and experience is equal to or greater than the benefit to the employer. The student must not displace a paid worker, the employer must provide close supervision, and the student must understand that there is no guarantee of a permanent job at the end of the internship. For more information on trainees, internship programs and FLSA, consult: www.dol.gov/elaws/esa/flsa/scope/er15.asp

Can a student's current job be used as a Co-op internship?

A student whose current job is related to their academic program may request to use the job as the basis for a Co-op Ed Internship. Students must arrange with the employer to take on responsibilities or projects that will provide new learning. The new work is typically only a portion of the student's responsibilities and should not prevent students from performing their regular work.



It is unusual for the IRS to view an intern as an independent contractor, since most interns require training and supervision, are expected to keep regular hours, work on the premises, and complete assigned tasks in a sequence determined by the supervisor. In other words, most interns do not operate independently. Details on how the IRS determines a worker's status can be found at: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1779.pdf

Do interns qualify for Unemployment Compensation?

Students who are officially registered in a college internship or Co-op Ed program do not qualify for unemployment compensation, unless they are hired as regular employees.

Employers are not obligated to pay:

State Unemployment Compensation Tax on all college or university cooperative education students, regardless of age {Chapter 567 of the Connecticut General Statutes, Section 31-222, paragraph 5 (J)}

Federal Unemployment Compensation Tax on all college or university cooperative education students, regardless of age (Federal Unemployment Tax Act).

Are internships subject to taxation?

Co-op students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents are responsible for all appropriate federal and state income taxes, and for FICA deductions.

Are NCC Co-op interns covered by insurance?

The State of Connecticut provides professional liability and medical insurance to students who are completing approved internships as part of a degree program.

■ Personal Professional Liability Coverage

Section 10-235 of Connecticut General Statutes provides for ... any student enrolled in a constituent unit of the state system of higher education who is engaged in a supervised program of field work or clinical practice which constitutes all or part of a course of instruction for credit by a constituent unit ... and is a requirement for an academic degree to be provided with professional and personal liability coverage.

■ Medical Insurance

All students enrolled in credit-bearing classes are provided with a School Time Accident and Sickness Insurance Plan that covers the student during College-sponsored site visitations, cooperative education programs, internships and field placements on or off campus.

Are interns covered by Workers' Compensation?

The National Association of Colleges and Employers advises employers to have a





student intern covered under the Workers' Compensation Program, even though the employer may pay a slight increase in premiums. The reason is that there are substantial limits under this program to the monetary awards available to a worker injured on the job. Once a worker accepts compensation for injury through this program, he or she is barred from pursuing a potentially much more costly negligence lawsuit.

According to NACE, if a student is paid a wage or salary, then the student should be covered by the employer's Workers' Compensation policy. If the student is unpaid or receives only a stipend, NACE recommends that the employer obtain a rider to its existing workers' compensation policy. Most workers' compensation boards view interns as employees, whether paid or unpaid, because of their contributions to an organization.

How do I legally hire an international student on an F1 visa?

International students on F1 Visas may accept paid employment off-campus only if the work they are hired to do is directly related to their course of study. It is the responsibility of the College and not the employer to determine if this connection exists. To support the College's documentation, employers are asked to provide a written job description.

F1 students at NCC must be enrolled in a degree program and actively taking classes. They may complete two internships through the Cooperative Education Program. Students who transfer to another school may complete additional internships under the sponsorship of that school.

F1 students are subject to federal and state income taxes, but not social security (FICA) taxes, as these are exempted under the Social Security Act (Sec.210(a)(19)).

“It has been exactly one year since Nasdaq converted me from intern to full-time employee. . . I am very grateful for the opportunity that NCC gave me to get my foot in the door.”

Laura D’Antona ‘99

“For my first work experience in the computer field, I could not have asked for more. My Co-op internship was perfect for me. Now I understand the kind of challenges I will meet in my career.”

Julie Arbonville ‘03



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