

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

SUPERVISOR / MENTOR GUIDE



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WELCOME

Thank you for participating in the County of Riverside's Student Internship Program. The primary purpose of the Student Internship Program is to attract the best and brightest of today's university students so they will become interested in the County of Riverside for full-time employment. Student Interns are encouraged to apply for positions which are related to their areas of study in school, and are in the fields where they would work if employed as permanent County employees. This program is vital to the success of Riverside County as it greatly enhances our image as an "employer of choice" and provides us with the opportunity to select and prepare high-potential students for future employment.

Consider the following benefits to having an intern if or when a full-time position becomes available:

- Early identification and attraction of top students before they have made long-term employment decisions
- Access to diverse populations who may otherwise be difficult to attract
- Opportunity to evaluate work before offering full-time employment
- Student would likely be more productive and require less training
- Improved retention rate since student would know what to expect

It is vital that student interns have a positive employment experience. Most companies successfully convert 50% of their student interns into full-time hires and as an "employer of choice," we should try to convert an even higher percentage. In addition, these students will serve as Riverside County marketing representatives on their university campuses. If they have a great experience, they will promote Riverside County to their peers and help us with our recruiting efforts; if they have a poor experience, they will speak negatively about us, which may affect our future recruitment at that university.

This manual will provide you with helpful information when planning for, hiring, and supervising/mentoring student interns. We hope you and your student interns find this to be a rewarding experience.

As an employer, the County of Riverside provides students with the opportunity to explore different avenues and develop skills to become a valuable contributor to the local community. We strive to strategically build a mutually beneficial relationship between the student, the educator, and the County.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Primary objectives of the internship program are:

- To identify a trained pool of prospective employees for future vacancies at the County of Riverside
- To influence the kinds of skills students will develop
- Ensure that the student intern entering the workforce will be adequately trained, thus alleviating some of the burden of future training costs
- To create goodwill at target campuses and increase presence among target graduates/intern candidates
- To develop County of Riverside ambassadors through continuous communication with students throughout the year
- To alter the perception of a “government employer” by providing a quality internship experience
- Expand the interpersonal, training, and supervisory skills of current employees as they mentor interns

PROGRAM TYPES

The County offers a mixture of paid and unpaid internships depending on the position and budgetary constraints of each sponsoring department. All appointments are part-time hourly, and work in an at-will status at the discretion of the appointing authority. Student Interns only receive benefits offered to TAP employees as outlined in the [TAP Handbook](#).

Student Interns may work a maximum of 20 hours per week during “regular academic sessions” (see definitions). Student Interns may work up to a maximum of 40 hours per week during school holidays if work is available and the Department approves the temporary work schedule. Recent graduates may work up to a maximum of 40 hours per week.

Note: Please visit the [Learning and Organizational Development](#) webpage to download the “Internship Program Guidelines” for a complete description of the eligibility/qualification requirements, recruitment/selection criteria and maintaining eligibility.

SUPERVISOR/MENTOR ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

THE ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR

Internships are a key way students can learn about the workplace environment, and the rules and expectations of the workplace. They will also gain the experience of contributing to the achievement of a common goal, and can begin to think about their own future. As a supervisor, you are responsible for making sure the student receives guidance during the internship. Some of this guidance will be practical – how to dress, how to answer the phone, when to take a break. Other guidance falls into the category of mentoring – coaching a student through difficult moments, listening and responding to their concerns, and showing interest in their progress. Finally, you are responsible for assessing the intern’s performance and giving feedback about their accomplishments and suggestions for improvement.

Specific Responsibilities Include:

- Identifying and designing tasks suitable for an intern, and skills/training necessary for the intern to complete these tasks
- Setting concrete goals for the intern with specific performance criteria and making sure the intern understands these goals and what constitutes acceptable performance
- Orientating the intern to the rules, culture, expectations and nature of the work done in your area and the way it contributes to the County overall
- Observing and supervising the intern’s performance
- Reviewing and signing the intern’s timesheet
- Spending regularly scheduled time with the intern and giving feedback about the performance. More time is generally needed at the beginning and end of the internship

Supervising an Intern

Supervising an intern requires a commitment of time and a clear idea of what you expect the intern to achieve. This must be communicated to the intern, and the intern must fully understand it. The two forms that facilitate intern supervision are: an Internship Performance Agreement which summarizes general expectations for the internship and describes a specific work plan that both the intern and supervisor agree to, and the Student Evaluation Survey which summarizes the intern’s accomplishments, as well as areas designated for attention and improvement.

It is best to review these forms with the intern, and make sure that both of you are on the same page regarding the projects the intern will be working on. It is important the intern be aware of the criteria by which performance will be judged. The criteria may be different or be applied in a different way from those with which the intern is familiar. By discussing the criteria in the beginning, you will avoid surprises later.

Dealing with Conflict

It is likely that an emotional conflict will arise at some point in the internship. For example, the intern may feel that you don't spend enough time mentoring and supervising which may lead the intern to feel resentment. Or you may disagree with the way an intern is completing a specific task and may find yourself feeling apprehensive.

Conflicts are a natural part of human relationships. In general, it is better to deal with conflicts instead of ignoring them. It will probably fall to you, as supervisor, to initiate this process. The first step to managing conflicts productively is to bring the conflict out in the open so it can be examined. This can be done by making an "I" statement and listening carefully to the intern's response. An "I" statement is an expression of personal feelings or thoughts, rather than a statement of criticism. It expresses what you feel or think. It does not express a general criticism or judgment.

Here's the difference. The following remark expresses a general criticism and is likely to be met with resentment or passive resistance: "Your responses when asked to complete assignments are rude. You'd better change your attitude!" You can approach the same issue using an "I" statement. "I'm feeling uncomfortable about the way you respond when asked to complete assignments. I think it makes our department look unprofessional, and I fear it will lead others to lose respect for our intern program. What do you think about this?" This opens the door to a discussion about the intern's self-perception, and allows the intern to enter into the conversation and discuss why he or she may be responding in a certain manner. Perhaps no one had commented on the intern's responses, and the intern wasn't aware of going beyond the limits of acceptable behavior. Or, maybe the intern has received inappropriate requests from some coworkers.

Whatever the case, the next step is for the supervisor and the intern to arrive at a solution. The best solutions are often arrived at through collaborative problem-solving and/or compromise. This collaborative problem-solving approach will be more effective for long-term solutions.

Successful Conflict Management Builds from:

- Recognizing that there are always multiple points of view, and that an intern is entitled to an opinion
- Getting the conflict out in the open so it can be addressed, "I" statements often are a useful way to make this happen

- Listening carefully to the intern's point of view without judgment
- Focusing on ways to resolve the conflict
- Making sure both the supervisor and the intern understand the solution

THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR

The role of the employer/intern host is essentially one of mentor. The intern who arrives at the workplace will have been carefully matched to the employer; the student will have expressed interest in working with the given organization and will have had a thorough orientation to both general workplace expectations and to the organization itself. However, for many students, their internship will be their first "real world" work experience and some students may even have had difficulties in meeting standard workplace expectations in the past. The host, therefore, must see the student as a trainee, not as an experienced employee.

The role of mentor will involve careful explanation of expectations, ongoing guidance, feedback and training to the intern, and formal evaluation. It is also expected that students will be given real work and problems to solve, will be offered continual challenges, and at the same time, will have the opportunity to master specific skills and/or achieve meaningful goals.

One of the critical roles a mentor plays in the initial stages of the mentor-intern relationship is profiling. During profiling, the mentor skillfully examines and assesses the intern's academic background, life experiences, cultural background and knowledge of the workplace. This process will quickly aid in building trust between the intern and the mentor. The more accurately profiling is done, the more proactive the mentor can be in providing the degree of support and challenges each individual intern will need to be successful.

What Mentors do:

- Provide "inside information" and practical training and instruction
- Teach knowledge of company culture, traditions and values to help interns become acclimated and comfortable
- Show interns how to use the department's system(s)
- Help interns improve performance by helping them learn specific skills
- Build interns' confidence with pep talks, motivation and encouragement
- Recognize, encourage and foster interns' potential
- Inspire interns to achieve high performance standards
- Foster creativity and help interns develop their own style
- Offer advice and encourage interns to ask for help
- Help interns build relationships with other employees who can provide information and guidance

Basic Responsibilities:

- Understand the students' goals, objectives, and areas of interest and try to incorporate those areas into tasks
- Be clear about the job responsibilities with the student before the internship begins
- Reiterate the importance of nondisclosure/confidentiality as it applies to your specific department
- Reiterate the importance of conduct rules and reasons for immediate termination of internship
- Review safety rules and emergency procedures, including the location of emergency exits, fire extinguishers, and first-aid kits
- Be clear with students regarding specific department procedures
- Be clear with students regarding changes in internship responsibilities
- Be clear with students if there are supervisor/mentor changes
- Review students' work on a regular basis
- Provide feedback to students on a regular basis

Other Helpful Hints:

- Respect the confidentiality of students and student information
- Respect the professional opinion of the teachers and internship facilitators
- Encourage students to relate their internship experiences back to their schools
- Remember that good communication is the key to effective problem resolution
- Introduce students to the people they will be interacting with

Final Comments on Mentoring:

It is important to remember that an intern is a student who has come to your organization to learn about the work environment and develop skills and attitudes that will be useful to them throughout their career. Although you should set high expectations for intern performance, it is unrealistic to expect immediate perfection. Most interns will need guidance, coaching and practice, and this is where the role of mentor becomes crucial.

Good mentors are able to put themselves in the place of the intern and understand the world from the intern's point of view. By taking the intern's perspective, they are able to propose suggestions that will "make sense" to the intern.

Good Mentors are Able to:

- Maintain eye contact and listen to the intern without talking or interrupting and resist external distractions
- Provide patient guidance and suggestions that demonstrate you understand the intern's point of view
- Present the discussion in a way that gives the intern a new perspective on the issue and suggest a new course of action
- Provide encouragement and counsel

STUDENT INTERN REQUIREMENTS

Most likely, the intern has little familiarity with your industry or enterprise, and what you and your fellow employees do each day is also a mystery. Many interns will be unfamiliar with dress codes, workplace expectations and etiquette, and legal restrictions such as nondisclosure agreements. Finally, the student interns will need help understanding the tasks they are to accomplish.

County New Hire Requirements:

The offer of a student internship with the County of Riverside is contingent upon the student's successful completion of a Live Scan background investigation, pre-employment physical (when applicable), and new hire orientation. During the orientation, the intern will be provided with employment forms, County policies, and pay procedures. As interns, their employment with the County of Riverside is considered temporary "at-will" and does not offer County benefits.

Departmental Orientation:

Although the orientation of an intern must be tailored to your particular department, a general orientation could include:

- Providing the intern with a designated area in which to store personal belongings and complete work
- Explaining the general nature of your organization; it may be helpful to have interns read policy manuals, employee newsletters, or other descriptive information explaining the specific work accomplished in your area and the way in which this contributes to the overall functioning of the organization; this is a good time to introduce the intern to fellow employees and to explain the functions they perform
- Explaining workplace expectations such as dress code, interpersonal, telephone, and technology etiquette, off-limit equipment or places; clarify the hours during which an intern is expected to be at work and procedures to be followed if an intern cannot be at work or is late
- Explaining machine operation and the location of restrooms, break rooms, and any other relevant facilities locations
- Explaining the tasks you expect the intern to complete, the training you have made available (if any), and the individual the intern should turn to when questions and problems arise
- Establishing a supervisory relationship and common expectations for how frequently and for how long you will meet with the intern, and what actions by the intern require/do not require your permission

EVALUATIONS

Assessing the Intern's Performance:

Assessment is an ongoing process, not just something to be addressed at the end of the internship. Assessment is an essential part of supervision. It is helpful for supervisors to reflect on "how is the intern doing?" while observing day-to-day work. This not only provides a sense of progress the intern is making, but provides specific incidents for discussion. Depending upon the nature of the incident and its importance to the intern's overall development, these discussions may take place during the regular meetings between the supervisor and the intern. They may also be used to document growth and/or areas for continued improvement in the final evaluation conference.

Assessment should be confined to the areas specified in the "Internship Performance Agreement" signed by the intern and the supervisor. It should address the specific tasks agreed upon at that time. As far as possible, the assessment process should introduce the intern to the performance evaluation systems typical of the workplace. The evaluation should have both a written and an oral component. It is generally useful to have the intern perform a self-assessment at the same time as the supervisor's assessment.

Student Intern Evaluation:

In addition to the departmental Student Evaluation, some students may require a final evaluation for their academic program to be completed by their supervisor/mentor at the end of the internship program. The evaluation will be provided by the student from the university or college the student attends. Please retain a copy for yourself for future assessment of the student intern or regular employment considerations.

Supervisor/Mentor and Program Evaluations:

Each student should be given the opportunity to submit an evaluation on their supervisor/mentor. The Internship Team will email the students an evaluation and request that the students complete evaluations rating the Internship Program and their supervisor/mentor. Feedback on the evaluations will be provided to the departments by the Internship Team.

CONTACT

Contact the Riverside County Internship Program team with any questions or concerns at internship@rivco.org.

REFERENCES

- 1) Author not listed. (2002). Company X Internship Guide. TMP.Worldwide.
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- 4) University Relations and Recruiting, Unisys Corp. (10/1999). Student Employment Program Manager's Manual. Unisys Corp