INTRODUCTION

Career Services at St. Lawrence University would like to thank you for your interest in becoming an active sponsor of undergraduate internships. We believe that internships are truly a “win-win” situation. Your organization gets an excited new staff member to assist with special projects and to offer perspectives based upon current classroom knowledge while a St. Lawrence intern has the opportunity to gain valuable real-world experience and to explore a specific career area in depth.

This guidebook is designed to help Internship Sponsors develop and structure a meaningful learning experience for St. Lawrence interns. We acknowledge that there are few universal truths in this process; however, this document should provide a general framework for your internship program.

INTERNSHIP FACTS

What is an internship?
An internship is a short-term structured experience with an employer in a career field of interest to the student. This placement provides an opportunity outside the classroom for students to actively explore their interest, to gain practical experiences and to assess if they wish to further pursue a chosen field. Interns typically spend between ten and 40 hours per week working on various projects, assignments and tasks as assigned by the internship supervisor. Internships typically occur over academic breaks (winter and summer), and can last from three weeks to three months.

Why is an internship important?
In today’s job market, actual experience can make a significant difference in a student’s career prospects. An internship is one critical way our students can showcase and develop their talents. More importantly, the contacts students make during their internship will become useful networks during their future job search.

TYPES OF INTERNSHIPS

PAID
In these situations, interns typically receive monetary compensation. This may be a one-time stipend or a weekly/hourly salary. Compensation is typically negotiated during the selection process. Alternatives may include reimbursements for travel, housing or other living expenses.

UNPAID
With the exception of compensation, these internships are no different than other learning experiences. They encourage the student’s commitment and dedication to the field more than financial gain. Researching financial alternatives such as grants, scholarships, flexible work hours, additional part-time work, or housing assistance may enable students to pursue this type of learning experience. Career Services offers Internship Fellowship Awards to assist with these expenses.
ACADEMIC
St. Lawrence University does not offer academic credit for internships except in very rare cases. The awarding of credit is at the discretion of the faculty. Students wishing to pursue an internship for credit must find a faculty sponsor. Faculty sponsors may require additional work from the student as well as documentation from the sponsor in order for credit to be awarded.

SPONSORED INTERNSHIPS

Each year, a number of SLU alumni, parents, and friends offer to sponsor an internship opportunity for current students. While some are specifically for SLU applicants, other placements are competitive and SLU students are evaluated against all other internship applicants. These internships represent a very tangible way to meet the needs of your company while providing a quality learning experience for current St. Lawrence students.

When you decide to target one or more of your internship opportunities to SLU students, Career Services can establish a Resume Referral. Collection of applications for these opportunities would be coordinated through our office and be open to any currently matriculated student who meets the specified internship requirements as outlined by you the sponsor. Resumes would be forwarded to you electronically and we also can arrange space for you if you would like to conduct on-campus interviews. Note: Career Services will not pre-select candidates at any point in the collection process.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A QUALITY INTERNSHIP SITE

Much of what contributes to a quality internship experience is determined by the amount of planning done by the internship supervisor. Just as any regular employee needs clear expectations, a solid job description, resources and support to get the job done, interns will also benefit from your organization’s preparations. Your internship program should include the following:

- A position description completed prior to the start of the internship
- Realistic and pre-professional goals, tasks, and/or projects (less than 50% “go-fer” or clerical work)
- Opportunities to apply principles learned in the classroom
- Conscientious orientation/training that includes introduction to company culture and office procedures as well as training for specific projects
- Ongoing structured supervision with opportunities for constructive feedback and questions
- Opportunities to observe and participate with professionals in action (staff meetings, client meetings, presentations)
- Opportunities to talk with professionals in the department about their jobs and career paths
- Opportunities to develop specific skills (i.e. research, writing, computer, and presentation skills)
- Evaluation of overall experience
- A sense of closure through recognition of intern contributions, reflection on learning experiences, and wrap-up of on-going projects
- Follow-up, in the form of letters of recommendation, networking, etc., if requested

In addition, we recommend reviewing the Department of Labor’s unpaid internship factsheet http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf
and the National Association of Colleges and Employer’s position statement on internships
http://www.naceweb.org/connections/advocacy/internship_position_paper/

PLAYERS IN AN INTERNSHIP

Intern
A student who will become a temporary member of your organization

Sponsor
A sponsor is an alumnus, parent or friend of St. Lawrence who wishes to target St. Lawrence students for a particular internship. The sponsor typically works with the office to arrange the internship opportunity. Sponsors may do any or all of the following: secure the commitment from their organization to recruit St. Lawrence students for an internship at their organization, assist applicants in the process, screen applicants, interview applicants, and/or act as On-Site Supervisor.

On-Site Supervisor
The On-Site Supervisor is the person an intern will report to during the internship experience. The On-Site Supervisor may or may not be the person who sponsored the internship or who hired the intern. On-Site Supervisors give assignments and projects, introduce an intern to the organization and fellow employees, teach her or him about the career field and evaluate his or her performance.

Career Services
Throughout the internship, the Internship Coordinator from Career Services will be available to assist the Intern, Sponsor, Site Supervisor, and, in those rare cases, the Faculty Sponsor with any aspect of the learning experience. Career Services can assist the sponsor with the creation of an internship position description as well as other details associated with posting the position. Career Services will also promote the opportunity to students and follow-up with the sponsor on placements.

Faculty Sponsor
In the rare cases where an intern pursues an internship for academic credit he or she must secure a Faculty Sponsor to work with during the internship experience. A Faculty Sponsor acts as the internship advisor. He or she approves any learning agreement, which may include requirements such as writing a paper or completing a special project. A Faculty Sponsor communicates with the On-Site Supervisor, evaluates intern performance (in conjunction with the On-Site Supervisor), and determines the final grade for the internship. A Faculty Sponsor may or may not choose to visit an internship site in order to observe an intern in their work environment.

RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Responsibility of Student Interns
Because most employers understand that an internship is an opportunity for students to gain valuable experience each internship experience has different requirements and expectations for its interns.
Career Services recommends that any student who is considering an internship meet at least the following basic eligibility requirements:

- The student intern should be a fully matriculated student at St. Lawrence University.
- The student intern should be enrolled in an approved major as defined by the Registrar (juniors and seniors only).
- The student intern should possess basic communication and organizational skills.
- The student intern should be available for a specific time period.
- Prior to beginning the student intern should meet with the Internship Coordinator to discuss the internship.
- The student intern should commit to being always on time and fully engaged in the position.

Responsibilities of an On-Site Supervisor

Depending on the formality of the internship, these responsibilities may vary. Generally these will include:

- A written job description that outlines the intern’s duties and responsibilities, coursework or special skills required, compensation options, and method of evaluation
- A staff member who is dedicated to serve as the intern’s supervisor for the entire learning experience
- Thoughtfully planned and meaningful internship assignments that include specific projects as well as ancillary tasks that introduce the intern to the entire organization
- Orientation for the intern to discuss her or his responsibilities, objectives and expectations
- Necessary training and information to enable the intern to perform the assigned tasks
- Opportunities for the intern to interact as a colleague with others at the organization
- Regular meetings with the intern to discuss progress on projects, reflections on the internship and opportunities for feedback
- A formal mid-term evaluation to assess the intern’s progress during the first half of the internship
- A final evaluation summarizing the intern’s experiences as well as the intern’s completion of the agreed upon evaluation process

Resources from Career Services

We are committed to assisting you as you develop meaningful learning opportunities for student interns. To that end, we offer:

- Professional staff who will collaborate with you in the development of quality learning experiences and internship descriptions
- Marketing of your internship to students and faculty on campus through e-mail, flyers, newsletters, and other venues
- Internship database to promote your internship, where desired, to students at colleges across the country
- Coordinated application collection through our Resume Referral program
- Assistance in arranging on-campus interviews and coordination with interested students
- Assistance in evaluating the internship

**ORIENTATION AND TRAINING**

Supervising interns is as important (possibly more important) than supervising full-time employees. For many students, this may be their first career related work experience. The guidance and feedback you provide are an important part of their overall internship experience.

Not every suggestion works for every intern or in every organization. Some sponsors may have highly structured company procedures to follow while others may have individual approaches to
training their interns. To assist you in planning your orientation program, the following suggestions are offered.

- Begin internship orientation the first day.
- Provide a handbook if possible.
- Review informal organizational policies such as where to park, office hours, acceptable dress and appearance, lunch and coffee breaks, use of telephone and computers.
- Provide written materials regarding policies on smoking, sexual harassment, safety regulations, potential health hazards, code or ethics, security and confidentiality issues if relevant, and other formal materials important to the office and company.
- Introduce the intern to the workspace and explain expectations of maintaining it. Provide training as needed, on how to use office equipment such as the facsimile and copy machines, mail and telephone systems, and computer software including providing them with necessary accounts, logins, and passwords.
- Provide intern with a tour of the facilities and introduce them to co-workers.
- Discuss the internship project. Review the internship description and the intern’s expectations of the experience. Discuss how projects fit into any organizational goals. In addition to telling the intern how to do the task, tell them why the task is important. Also review which tasks can be completed without supervisory approval.
- Discuss the On-Site Supervisor as well as the back-up person to contact when the supervisor is out of the office.
- Clarify performance standards and organizational climate. Discuss expectations regarding attendance, punctuality, appropriate behavior, and proper attire.
- Provide a list of personnel who can answer different questions as well as a staff list with phone numbers.
- Outline the organizations’ communication process (internal and external) and chain of accountability. Clarify the extent of the intern’s job authority or decision-making capability. Determine what resources are available to the intern, such as clerical assistance, supplies, and professional associations and publications. Explain how the intern should handle clients, customers, and vendors.
- Explain reimbursement policies and other budget considerations.

**SUPERVISING AN INTERN**

Our research has found that effective Site Supervisors utilize many of the following strategies in their programs. Consider adopting those which complement the natural work environment of your organization.

- Provide an orientation and training.
- Give your interns material to read such as newsletters, annual reports, an organizational chart, or memo form the CEO.
- Encourage interns to spend lunch and break times in places where employees gather.
- Determine reasonable checkpoints for a project evaluation and for performance feedback throughout the internship. Be specific about end-stage requirements such as reports, presentations, or policy recommendations.
- If an intern is to work with more than one supervisor, both supervisors should be aware of the work assigned by each.
- Schedule weekly meetings between intern and supervisor. Weekly meetings should provide both parties with an opportunity to ask questions, review work, offer feedback and suggestions, give assignments, and plan for upcoming activities. Clear channels of communication are critical in reducing misunderstandings between interns and supervisors.
Former student interns are an excellent source of feedback for any internship program and its key players. According to Marianne Ehrlich Green’s book *Internship Success: Real World Step-by-Step Advice on Getting the Most Out of Internships*, “Site Supervisors play a tremendous role in the student’s internship and their involvement significantly influences the outcome of the learning experience.” Green’s research outlines a specific list of traits students valued in their internship supervisor.

**Characteristics of the best internship supervisors**

- Approachable
- Interested in the intern’s career and academic goals
- Gives assignments that balance task completion with substantive work
- Monitors interns activities through regular meetings
- Provides feedback
- Helps interns meet her or his goals as stated in the learning contract
- Provides adequate resources, material, and money to allow interns to complete their assigned tasks
- Shows appreciation for work that interns do
- Gives interns advice on their career path
- Makes sincere efforts to integrate interns into staff
- Views reasonable mistakes as learning opportunities
- Gives interns the chance to learn new skills
- Allows interns to participate in projects that they can work on from the beginning to the end
- Provides interns with a reference for their credential folder or dossier

Students also reported that effective supervision lasts more than just the first day. Interns benefit from regular, predictable contact with the On-Site Supervisor and other members of the staff. More importantly, they value the opportunity to be recognized as a contributing member of the organization.

**POSSIBLE INTERNSHIP PROJECTS**

- Performing laboratory tests
- Writing handbooks or manuals
- Designing poster, charts, graphs
- Generating financial forecast and cost recovery reports
- Performing software/hardware modification
- Conducting studies and surveys
- Developing slide/sound presentations
- Compiling technical reports
- Creating academic lesson plans
- Conducting research
- General marketing plans
- Conducting training packages
- Preparing budgets and financial reports
- Learning new software programs common to the industry
- Preparing proposals

Also remember that professional staff members from Career Services are available to offer guidance and assistance in developing your internship program.
COMPENSATION ISSUES

Compensation can be one of the most complicated considerations when preparing for an intern. Not all organizations have the same resources available yet many student interns look closely at this when searching for internships. It may be of some help to consider the following when determining how to compensate interns.

- The quality of an interns’ experience need not be diminished simply because an internship is unpaid. However, the quality and number of available candidates for the hiring organization may be reduced because financial need prevents some highly qualified students from pursuing unpaid opportunities.
- In a for-profit organization it is common for employers to offer a stipend or hourly wage. The advantage of a stipend is that you can avoid adding short-term workers to payroll. However, be sure to determine and satisfy any federal and state income tax requirements related to paying an intern.
- In certain fields paid internships are the norm because of the specialized skills these students bring to the hiring organization. Students majoring in these fields are in demand and may have the luxury of choosing the best offer.
- In the not-for-profit sector, it is more common for internships to be unpaid. For the most part, students interested in working for not-for-profit organizations are aware that these positions may be unpaid.
- In the case of an unpaid internship, it is typical for interns to work part-time so they can earn money through another job.
- Should you choose to use unpaid interns and your company is a for-profit organization, be sure that your intern is considered a trainee under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Given the limited duration of an internship, the out-of-pocket cost associated with compensating interns may produce a strong return-on-investment over the long run in terms of lower recruiting cost and reduced turnover.

St. Lawrence Consideration

Through our experiences with previous Sponsored Internships, there are several additional points to consider when working with St. Lawrence students.

- For summer the average low-end salary offered to students in an urban area is $250-$300 per week.
- For January internships, students typically need housing assistance as well as the opportunity to earn money for spring semester expenses.
- For rural area internships, housing may be as important to consider as the salary or stipend itself.
- Some students are very open to the idea of considering accommodation and a much smaller stipend as compensation for an internship.
- Alternative forms of compensation have included professional development seminars, computer skills training, free skiing, and or travel or commuter reimbursements.
Thank you for considering sponsoring a St. Lawrence intern. If you have any further questions, please contact Emily McDonnell, the Career Services Internship Coordinator, at emcdonnell@stlawu.edu or 315-229-5906.