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# INTERNSHIP EMPLOYER HANDBOOK

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Thank you for helping FVCC students prepare for the workplace!  
Questions? Connect with Career Services at 406.756.3880 or [careers@fvcc.edu](mailto:careers@fvcc.edu)

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## **1) WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?**

At Flathead Valley Community College, internships offer unique learning experiences that earn college credit. Like classroom work, internships are an integral part of a student's educational preparation. An internship allows the student an opportunity to enhance their academic learning through hands-on application while learning about the workplace and their chosen field of study.

Hours at the worksite are determined according to academic guidelines based on the number of course credits, with 1 credit allotted for approximately every 45 hours, depending on the student's program of study. For example, interns spend 135-150 hours at their worksites for a 3 credit course usually working about 10-20 hours per week. Internship courses generally take place after the student has completed at least two semesters of classroom learning, so they have skills needed for the workplace. Work schedules vary depending upon the needs of the business and the student's schedule.

### **DEFINITION:**

As a member of the **National Association of Colleges and Employers**, Flathead Valley Community College follows the NACE recommended definition and standards for Internships:

***"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. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent."***

### **STANDARDS FOR AN EXPERIENCE TO BE DEFINED AN INTERNSHIP:**

To ensure that an experience—whether it is a traditional internship or one conducted remotely or virtually—is educational, and thus eligible to be considered a legitimate internship by the NACE definition, all the following criteria must be met:

- 1) The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom.**
- 2) It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.**
- 3) The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.**
- 4) The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.**
- 5) There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework.**
- 6) There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience. There is routine feedback provided by the experienced supervisor.**
- 7) There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.**

If these criteria are followed, it is the opinion of NACE that the experience can be considered a legitimate internship. *NACE Position Statement on U.S. Internships.*

## **2) BENEFITS**

### **INTERNSHIP SITE:**

- Opportunity to try out trained, potential employees who have demonstrated dedication and interest in an occupation
- Assists in recruitment, selection, and retention of employees
- Establishes relationship with the college and workforce of the future
- Gives the opportunity to share input to college about the quality and relevance of FVCC's curriculum to fit your workforce needs
- Enhances employee motivation and can reduce hiring and training costs
- Gain a fresh perspective and learn from interns

### **STUDENTS:**

- Integrate classroom theory with workplace practice
- Learn new skills, use industry-specific equipment and technology
- Clarify academic and career goals and learn more about local business and industry
- Gain confidence, knowing applicability of skills and knowledge
- Explore the workplace and learn more about career opportunities
- Opportunity to get a "foot in the door" and network with potential employers
- Receive references or referrals to other potential employers
- May lead to job, letter of reference or recommendation to an employer

### **COLLEGE & COMMUNITY:**

- Demonstrated relevance of education to "real world" increases student motivation, retention, and future employment potential
- Helps fulfill the college's mission of preparing our students for the workforce
- Provides college/faculty with information on skill demands and employment trends
- Establishes partnerships between business/industry/organizations and academia
- Helps meet the training needs of the community while providing a larger range of learning opportunities for students

## **3) ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **INTERNSHIP SITE BEFORE:**

- Verify the ability of the business to provide meaningful mentoring and opportunities for intern learning and skill practice.
- Provide adequate working space, training, supplies, and equipment for student training and learning.
- Discuss internship process, learning components, and legal issues including wage, compensation, and worker's compensation with the Internship Coordinator.
- In unpaid internships, verify that the internship will meet the [Department of Labor Fair Standards Act](#) criteria (see Legal Guidelines).
- Complete an internship listing that includes an overview of daily and project tasks, minimum skills and qualifications, and application procedures.
- Enter positions onto the **online FVCC Career Board** at [www.fvcc.edu/career-board](http://www.fvcc.edu/career-board).

- Review resumes, interview prospective interns and inform candidates & Career Development Coordinator of hiring decisions.
- Sign off on **Internship Agreement**; **verify that it has been received by the college before the student starts their internship.**
- Assure that the students will be accepted and given assignments without regard to age, handicap, national origin, race, marital status, parental status, religion, or sexual orientation.
- Since students in our internship program earn academic credit and a component of their field experience grade is based upon evaluations by the student's supervisor, we do not allow students to intern for their family's business nor with an organization where a student's family member or significant other ranks above the student's supervisor. It poses a conflict of interest and could influence the intern's experience and grade.

#### **INTERNSHIP SITE DURING:**

- Train and orient student to all health and safety practices and organizational policies and procedures applicable to the internship.
- Provide input to student in developing specific learning objectives, then provide assistance and training necessary to help student meet those learning objectives.
- Track hours and initial **Monthly Time Sheets** by the last day of the month.
- Establish a regular meeting time. Meet with the intern at least weekly to provide direction and feedback.
- Participate in an on-site visit from the Internship Instructor and assess student learning by completing and returning a **Mid-Term** and **Final Evaluation** noting interns' progress toward accomplishment of learning objectives.
- Contact the Instructor/Faculty regarding questions about student learning and performance. Be sure to notify instructor if there are any issues including excessive absenteeism or tardiness.

#### **INTERNSHIP SITE AFTER:**

- Complete an **Internship Provider Program Evaluation** via email.

#### **STUDENT--AFTER ACCEPTANCE OF INTERNSHIP:**

- Review the course syllabus available from your instructor.
- Have a discussion with your internship mentor and meet with your faculty instructor during the first week of your internship to complete your **Learning Objectives** assignment and have it signed by your faculty instructor and training mentor.
- Work to accomplish those objectives. Your progress toward accomplishing those **Learning Objectives** will be evaluated on your **Mid-Term**, **Final**, and **Self Evaluations**.
- Complete all course assignments by due dates noted including learning objectives, activity logs, timesheets, site visit setup, and evaluations. Turn in **Monthly Time Sheets** initialed by your site supervisor by the 1st of the following month.
- Follow professional standards of conduct, organizational policies, and safety standards. *Violations of professional ethics, insubordination, unexcused absences, breaches of confidentiality, or failure to turn in assignments on a timely basis are cause for termination, removal from the internship site and will result in an "F" grade.*

- Share any concerns regarding your learning or assignments with your Faculty Instructor.
- **Report any accidents to the Training Site Supervisor immediately and notify FVCC's business office at (406) 756-3821.**

**COLLEGE INSTRUCTOR :**

- Sign off on the INTERNSHIP AGREEMENT form.
- Meet with interns either individually or in groups to go over syllabus.
- Advise and assist the student in the development of clear, concise, measurable learning objectives and sign off on their FINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES during the first few weeks of the internship.
- Monitor and provide feedback during the student's internship experience through activity logs, journals, discussion, and monthly timesheets, either in person or via an online course.
  - Turn in all student intern's MONTHLY TIME SHEETS by the 1st of the following month to the Career Advisor.
- Meet with the student, in person, at least two times during the term, at least **once at the worksite**.
- Contact the internship site supervisor at least twice during the term, with an introductory phone call in the beginning of the semester and an in-person site visit to discuss progress with the student and internship providers.
- Assess learning and student progress toward meeting learning objectives and assign grades.

**COLLEGE CAREER ADVISOR:**

- Provide businesses, faculty, and students with information about the internship program and internship opportunities available.
- Discuss opportunities for learning and relevance of job description to major, degree area, and intern's career goals with potential internship sites.
- Ensure that the internship site has adequate resources – workspace, training time, and mentoring to enable the student to complete their learning objectives in an environment conducive to learning.
- Review guidelines regarding compensation, employment status, worker's compensation, and other employment laws with prospective internship sites.
- Maintain internship listings, database and provide assistance to help students locate internship sites with quality learning opportunities.
- Orient students on the internship process, development of application materials, and how to research potential internship providers.

#### **4) LEGAL ISSUES**

##### **COMPENSATION:**

Internships can be paid or unpaid. The need for compensation is dependent upon the nature of the student's position and whether or not it meets the criteria noted below under the Fair Labor Standards Act. As students pay tuition for internships as academic courses, we endorse compensation for our students. Compensation can help students make a significant contribution to their education and may lessen a student's burden toward meeting financial obligations, enabling them to concentrate on their education and career goals.

Generally, activities occurring at a business that involve the performance of productive work would be considered employment, although some limited exceptions exist for student learners and trainees. Whether students are employees of an employer under the Fair Labor Standards Act will depend upon all of the circumstances surrounding their activities on the premises of the employer. Unless an internship meets the Fair Labor Standards Act criteria listed below for a trainee, employment law requires employers to pay at least the minimum wage to employees. In a paid internship, interns are considered employees of the business and are subject to the provisions of Montana employment law.

According to the Department of Labor Fair Labor Standards Act, if **any of the following criteria on the following checklist is absent, the work performed by the student will likely constitute employment** subject to the provisions of the FLSA. Further, it is recommended that all information and transactions related to a work-based activity be documented, including a written agreement of the terms and conditions of the activity such as a job description.

##### **"Employee" or "Trainee" – Work-Based Learning Checklist**

Is your intern an employee or a trainee? This checklist, provided by the **National Association of Colleges and Employers**, notes some considerations to review to help you determine if your interns meet the criteria set forth by the [Fair Labor Standards Act](#). **If you can affirm that your intern meets these criteria, your intern is likely a "trainee."**

- The work is an integral part of the student's course of study.
- The student will receive credit for the work or the work is required for graduation.
- The student must prepare a report of his/her experience and submit it to a faculty supervisor.
- The employer has received a letter or some other form of written documentation from the school stating that it sponsors or approves the internship and that the internship is educationally relevant.
- Learning objectives are clearly identified.
- The student does not perform work that other employees perform.
- The student is in a shadowing/learning mode.
- The employer provides an opportunity for the student to learn a skill, process, or other business function, or to learn how to operate equipment.
- There is educational value to the work performed, i.e. it is related to the courses the student is taking in school.
- The student is supervised by a staff member.
- The student does not provide benefit to the employer more than 50 percent of the time.
- The employer did not guarantee a job to the student upon completion of the training or completion of schooling.

## **WORKER'S COMPENSATION**

**Paid internship:** Interns are considered employees of the business/organization and the employer must cover the intern under their worker's compensation policy.

**Unpaid:** If the internship is approved by the Career Advisor, meets the criteria for academic credit, and is truly a learning experience, FVCC provides worker's compensation for the student.

Be sure to note this on the **Internship Agreement**, along with the salary provided in a paid internship.

## **INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR or EMPLOYEE**

Students are not self-employed consultants and therefore, not considered independent contractors under Internal Revenue Service 1099. An individual is an independent contractor if the person for whom the work is performed has the right to control or direct only the result of the work and not the means and methods of accomplishing the tasks.

## **COLLEGE REGULATIONS & POLICY**

To promote an atmosphere that protects student's rights and is responsive to student's needs, all students are expected to maintain acceptable standards of behavior on or off campus at any college-sponsored event. College regulations on Students Rights and Responsibilities, including Code of Conduct, Academic Integrity, and a Sexual Harassment Policy along with a Right of Appeals and Grievances are outlined in the [FVCC College Catalog](#).

Since students in our internship program earn academic credit and a component of their field experience grade is based upon evaluations by the student's supervisor, we do not allow students to intern for their family's business nor with an organization where a student's family member or significant other ranks above the student's supervisor. It poses a conflict of interest and could influence the intern's experience and grade.

## **OTHER EMPLOYMENT LAWS**

In general, interns are deemed to be employees and that means they are protected by the same laws and regulations that protect other employees in the State of Montana.

### **Additional links to information on legal aspects of internships:**

[Department of Labor Fact Sheet # 71](#)  
[National Association of Colleges and Employers Position Statement](#)

You may also contact the Career Advisor for hard copies of these documents.

For legal advice, please consult with an attorney.

## **5) BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**DOCUMENT...DOCUMENT...DOCUMENT...** that you are following the guidelines for a learning experience vs. an employee to reduce risk of liability:

- 1) **Provide a clear description of the internship** – complete an internship opening form or enter your information into the online **FVCC Career Board**, that indicate the internship will include elements offering learning opportunities outside of the student’s day to day work tasks including:
  - a) Tasks and projects the student will be working on, noting the relationship to the student’s major.
  - b) Planned learning activities such as observation, mentoring, informational interviews, training attended and networking that is not connected to assigned tasks.
  - c) Make sure that 80% of the duties align within the student’s program of study.
- 2) **Assign an Internship Mentor** for each student, and set up periodic, at least weekly, times to discuss relevant learning per duties, tasks, and projects assigned.
- 3) **Require interns to attend an orientation** that will cover your company’s policies & procedures including sexual harassment, confidentiality, safety, and appropriate workplace behavior. Be sure to let them know who to go to in case of an issue and your complaint/grievance procedures.
- 4) **Control, track, and record the number of hours worked:**
  - a) FVCC requires your initials on a **Monthly Time Sheet**, due upon the 1<sup>st</sup> of the following month. Keep your records or copies to verify internship hours completed.
  - b) Do not allow the student to work hours above the number of internship hours recorded on the Internship Agreement unless you receive written approval from the college.
- 5) **Keep in contact with the assigned faculty advisor:**
  - a) Report any excessive or unexplained absences, dereliction of duties, or performance issues immediately to the assigned faculty.
  - b) Insist on having an in-person site visit from faculty to monitor and evaluate the student’s learning.
- 6) **Do not promise or imply that the intern will be hired** after the internship.

## **6) WRAPPING UP**

### **Provide Feedback**

The student will be providing you with a Student Performance Evaluation for you to complete. Please discuss this with the student and provide constructive feedback for improvement.

- You will be surveyed by the instructor or the college after the semester ends to learn about your experience. Please complete and return as soon as possible.
- Opportunity to provide curriculum feedback to the college regarding the needs of your workplace so we can continually improve and align our programs to the needs of the workforce.

