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Internships have become an essential part of the educational experience for college students. Many degrees require that students complete a viable internship to complement their academic preparation and enhance their entry into the professional world. An increasing number of employers have recognized the value that student interns can bring to the workplace and actively seek to host student interns. ECU has a rich history of students participating in internships and partners with employers to ensure a beneficial experience for all parties. Internships are varied and can fall into several categories: paid, unpaid, for credit, not-for-credit, alternating and parallel.

Significant national discussion has developed, particularly around the concept, purpose, structure, and function of internships, and the conditions under which internships can be accomplished on an unpaid basis.

This guide has been developed by Career Services at East Carolina University to respond to common questions regarding student internships. Specific issues not found in this guide may be directed to the Career Services at 252.328.6050 or career@ecu.edu.
Definition

An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill 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.”

Defined by: The National Association of Colleges and Employers

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

If these criteria are followed, it is the opinion of NACE that the experience can be considered a legitimate internship.
Internship vs. Part-Time Job

Differences between an internship and a part-time job

Differentiating between an internship and a part-time job is important for students and employers to consider before beginning an internship.

The following comparisons are helpful in making the determination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNSHIP</th>
<th>PART-TIME JOB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed for possible options: credit/no credit; credit and pay; pay/no pay</td>
<td>Completed for monetary purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning objectives reflect the goals of the student, the outcomes expected by the employer, and the requirements of the Faculty Internship Supervisor (if for credit)</td>
<td>Learns tasks of job in order to complete the work adequately but not necessarily for personal gain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects or ongoing work are purposeful and of a professional nature</td>
<td>Assigned work that needs to be completed, not necessarily professional in nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration/Hours:</strong> typically part-time (10-20 hours/week) in a semester or a summer (2-3 months); occasionally extended into next semester or year</td>
<td><strong>Duration/Hours:</strong> no specific start/end date or designated time frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisor</strong> serves as a mentor figure to aid the student in the learning process</td>
<td><strong>Supervisor</strong> serves as an authority figure to whom the employee reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities allow student to develop transferable skills</td>
<td>Serves to fill a basic position within the place of employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opportunity to obtain “real world” experience in the student’s field of interest and learn firsthand about companies and careers.
Credit / Non-Credit

Typically, an internship taken during the fall or spring semester allows a student to intern 10-20 hours a week while taking classes. During the summer, however, many students will opt to intern full-time and forgo taking classes.

Several academic departments at East Carolina University require internships as part of the degree requirements while others offer internships as elective credit within the major. It is important to consult with the departmental Faculty Internship Supervisor(s) to ensure compliance with the internship guidelines set by the academic department.

Paid / Unpaid Internships
Occasionally internships are unpaid. Some corporations see gaining experience as payment enough. This is especially true if the student has little or no practical experience in the industry. However, most organizations do offer an hourly wage or a stipend. In evaluating internship options, the quality of the opportunity should be the primary criterion.
U.S. Government statement on distinguishing paid or unpaid Internships

An unpaid internship in a for-profit company is considered legitimate by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) if it meets all of the following six criteria. (*May 2010*)

1. The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;
2. The internship is for the benefit of the intern;
3. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under the close supervision of existing staff;
4. The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;
5. The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
6. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

Student Benefits of Internships

- **Test out career choices**
  Internships allow students to “try on” a career before making a long term commitment. It can help them discover if the career they are considering is right (or wrong) for them.

- **Increase marketability**
  Employers consistently rate internship experience as one of the top criteria used when selecting candidates. Employer’s look for students with education and relevant experience.

- **Develop skills and apply knowledge**
  Internships provide opportunities to apply theories and knowledge learned in the classroom to actual on-the-job experiences. During the process, students can enhance skills specific to the chosen industry and confidence in the skills they already possess.

- **Acquire job search skills**
  Students will create a professional resume, sharpen their interviewing skills, and practice interacting professionally. These skills are essential for finding a job or for applying to graduate school.

- **Build networking contacts**
  Internships offer the opportunity to build a network of contacts in a chosen career field. More than half of all interns are hired by the organization where they interned!
ECU Resources

A comprehensive list of internship opportunities can be found on the Career Services website: www.ecu.edu/career

**Popular sites for finding internships:**

**ECU Career NET:** Career Services online job posting: www.ecu.edu/career

**Internships.com** - Search for internships in this exclusive online database. You can search information by academic major, location of internship, and/or compensation.

**Internships-USA.com** – Access 2,800 internships organizations offering internships and summer jobs. Username is: EastCarolina Password: GoPirates

**The Disney College Program** - The Disney College Program at the Walt Disney World® Resort is a one-of-a-kind, Disney-designed combination of education and work experience. http://cp.disneycareers.com/en/default/

**NC State Government Internships**
http://www.doa.nc.gov/yaio

**Green Careers Center**
http://environmentalcareer.com/

**Intern Abroad**
http://www.goabroad.com/intern-abroad

**Conservation Internships**
http://www.thesca.org/employment
America’s #1 conservation service organization, seeks field projects approved by Departments of Interior and Agriculture.

Internships and International Students

Looking for an internship as an international student has its own challenges. Many employers hesitate to work with international students because of concerns regarding communication barriers and difficulties adapting to the company’s environment.

To overcome these concerns students are recommended to emphasize the following:

- Intercultural skills
  Ability to speak another language
- Experiences you have had working in the U.S.
- Students are recommended to verify their ability to work in the United States by having the proper documents available.

**Working Under F-1 Status**
Students can never accept unauthorized employment. See below for the types of employment that are possible while in F–1 Student status.

- **F1 work authorization**
  http://www.ecu.edu/cs- acad/intlaffairs/visainformation.cfm

- **J-1 work authorization**
  http://www.ecu.edu/cs- acad/intlaffairs/visainformation.cfm
  may include off campus work

For additional information, please visit the ECU Office of International Programs at http://www.ecu.edu/cs- acad/intlaffairs/visainformation.cfm
or their office located at 306 East Ninth Street. Telephone number: 252.328.5829.
Course Registration

Recommended process for student registration of a credit bearing internship:

Step 1
- Meet with the departmental faculty internship advisor(s) to determine a fit for the minimum qualifications required by the department for interning.

Step 2
- Student explores internship opportunities through resources offered by the ECU Career Center and through faculty and other networking contacts.

Step 3
- BEFORE beginning the internship experience, the student should complete the required paperwork for the internship course registration and schedule an appointment with the Faculty Internship Supervisor(s) to clarify the learning objectives.

Step 4
- Instruct the student on the process for course registration.

- It is recommended the Faculty Internship Supervisor review the position description, clarify the learning objectives, review the requirements for successful completion of the experience and inform the student of intended communications with the Internship Site Supervisor.

  Don’t forget to mention the liability insurance charge to be added upon registration.
All ECU students participating in an internship for academic credit should have liability insurance coverage for the duration of the Internship experience. Students should determine the appropriate limits of liability coverage by meeting with the Faculty Internship Supervisor. East Carolina University offers student limited liability coverage at a reasonable rate. Please contact the Risk Management Office at 252.328.2010 for details.
Faculty Internship Supervisor’s Role

The faculty supervisor is responsible for helping the intern integrate the internship into his or her total academic experience. He or She provides academic direction and evaluates learning derived from the internship.

Early in the process of finding an internship, the student should approach the designated faculty internship supervisor in the academic department. The student and the faculty internship supervisor should meet to determine if the student is academically eligible to complete an internship with the department and to discuss the student’s goals in completing an internship.

Once the student has found an internship, the faculty supervisor will advise the student about the internship site and the site supervisor approval process, registration for the course, number of course credits, required liability insurance and fees associated with the course registration. The faculty supervisor also will help the student define the academic requirements for the internship. Academic requirements may include a final oral presentation to students and faculty on the experience, a journal, paper, relevant research and/or projects.

The faculty supervisor maintains appropriate contact with the student throughout the internship to give direction and support. The faculty supervisor is asked to initiate a phone call to the site supervisor prior to the signing of the internship approval form to establish contact and communication. Other forms of recommended contact throughout the internship are site visits, email, phone calls with the intern and the site supervisor, progress reports and feedback sent between the intern and the faculty supervisor. The amount and form of contact are determined by the faculty supervisor.
Student Suggestions for Success

Set realistic goals and expectations
Meet with the Work Site Supervisor to discuss a work plan. What specific skills and competencies are needed to acquire and demonstrate success? What is the time frame? What training is available? Monitor progress and encourage the student to meet with the work site supervisor regularly. It is recommended for students share their career interests and ideas. Communicate concerns early.

Maintain a “can do” attitude
The student should demonstrate eagerness to learn new things by welcoming new assignments. Understand all positions engage in a wide range of activities ... some that peak interests while others do not. Encourage students to tackle all assignments and projects with enthusiasm. Seek additional projects when appropriate.

Perform to the best of their ability
The student should understand the assignment and its deadline before beginning the assignment. If assistance is needed, then the student should ask. Remind the student to check their work before submitting to the supervisor. Encourage the student to ask for feedback.

Be respectful of colleagues
Interns are the new person in the office and can learn from every colleague, regardless of rank. The student should show all colleagues that they value their opinion and experience.

Support the team
The student’s ability to work well with others is key to their success. The team’s goals are the student’s goals. Understand how the team’s work fits into theirs.

Understand the unwritten rules
As a new employee, interns will absorb a tremendous amount of information. What is appropriate attire? What are expected hours? How do things get done? How do colleagues interact with one another? Are there office politics that could impact one’s work?

Be flexible
Interns may be near the end of a project when they are asked to start a new one. Priorities in an organization change. The intern’s willingness and ability to switch gears easily is required for success. The Work Site Supervisor will help the intern to prioritize assignments.

Identify a mentor
A mentor may be assigned to the intern or they may need to identify their own. This is often a more senior, respected professional in the field who would like to take a personal interest in an intern’s career development. With the mentor, the intern can ask for advice about their career decisions.

Document success
Interns should record the assignments, projects, and achievements. Maintain copies of evaluations and samples of their work. Encourage the intern to ask for letters of recommendation. They should be kept handy for future career conversations.
Keys to a Professional Reputation

Interns are expected to behave in a specific manner and take advantage of the numerous resources and opportunities provided. In order to accomplish the established learning objectives and develop a professional reputation, encourage your student interns to keep the following points in mind:

- **Understand and respect company policies.** Be aware of and respect company policies about when and where they can use personal devices. Until they are clear about the rules, turn off cell phones and music, and use the Internet only as allowed.

- **Define the internship goals.** Student interns may be invited to attend staff meetings, decision-making discussions, client negotiations, or other gatherings. Interns should clarify their role prior to going to these meetings so they behave in the expected manner.

- **Ask questions and request feedback.** Student interns should not hesitate to ask questions if they need clarification. Student interns should meet regularly with their supervisor for feedback about their performance, to learn more about the company, and seek out the opinion of the supervisor.

- **Attend events.** When invited to company-sponsored events, it is in the intern’s best interest to attend and behave in a professional manner. If the intern is invited to go out after work with other interns or full-time staff, encourage the student to use discretion and common sense.

- **Display a positive attitude.** Interns could be asked to complete tasks they do not like. Interns should avoid expressing frustration, speaking negatively about other employees, or bragging about their weekend activities. Interns, in developing professionalism that demonstrates a positive attitude, will reflect an ability to assume increased responsibility.

- **Wear professional attire.** Dressing for the culture where the intern works sends a strong and appropriate message of respect to the position and organization. Encourage your student interns to check with their supervisor before the first day about dress codes and dress accordingly.

Successful Practices

Interns are encouraged to maintain an open channel of communication with formal and informal meetings,

- Keep busy and directed towards the learning objectives.
- Ask for opportunities to increase responsibility
- Build professionalism by developing human relations skills, decision-making abilities and managing office politics
- Look for role models and a possible mentor
- Develop connections to support future networking opportunities
Measurable Learning Objectives

What do we mean by measurable learning objectives (MLO)?
Measurable Learning Objectives (MLOs) refer to a set of statements that clearly and precisely describe what the students intended to learn and/or accomplish during the internship work term.

Why are learning objectives important in an internship program?
Internships are primarily academic programs. Credit is granted not for working, but for learning, which occurs as a result of working. Learning objectives are the most effective method yet devised to assess the intent and value of this learning.

How do students develop and write my learning objectives?
Start by carefully reviewing the job and the internship description, note areas where the intern can gain new skills, increase knowledge or improve attitudes or feelings. It is important to avoid broad general statements. Confine objectives to those that can be accomplished during a single term.

Usually, a MLO combines four major variables to form a single sentence. The variables or components are ACTIVITY, FORECAST, TIME FRAME and EVALUATION. The activity is the desired outcome or expected achievement, the forecast is the proposed level of accomplishment, the time frame is the expected completion date and the evaluation is the stated method of measurement.

EXAMPLE:
By the end of the term (TIME FRAME) the intern will review effective pricing and value setting (ACTIVITY) which meets corporate marketing specifications (FORECAST) as evaluated by my work site supervisor (EVALUATION).

A very important element in the development of MLOs is often called the ACTION WORD. There is one action word used in the example above (review). Action words are found in all MLOs, because they lead to measurable outcomes. Other examples of action words are demonstrate, describe, develop, draw, discuss, operate, perform, summarize, recognize, etc. See a longer list of action words in the Career Services Career Resource Guide located at www.ecu.edu/career.

SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:
Avoid broad, general objectives. Make them specific and as measurable as possible. Try to confine them to those that can be accomplished during the work period.
Be sure to incorporate enough knowledge, skill, time and freedom at work to accomplish learning. Indicate the level of achievement expected whenever possible in numerical terms (e.g. Increase speed by 15%).
# Frequently Asked Questions

### Students may ask the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>CREDIT INTERNSHIP</th>
<th>NON-CREDIT INTERNSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long is the experience?</td>
<td>During the academic year. About 12 to 14 weeks or the length of the semester. In the summer: Three to four months.</td>
<td>The length of an experience may vary. Generally, the experience will last several months, though length is up to the discretion of the supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can students take a full academic course load?</td>
<td>Yes. Credit internships can be done concurrently during the semester (parallel) or over the summer (alternating).</td>
<td>Yes. Non-credit internships are done concurrently during the semester or the summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will I get academic credit?</td>
<td>Credit varies for each academic program. See the department Faculty Internship Supervisor for specific information.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I get academic credit if I do not have a major?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will this experience be documented on the student transcript?</td>
<td>Yes. A grade or a satisfactory/unsatisfactory will be listed on your transcript in accordance with the rules governing credit internships for your major</td>
<td>No. The experience can be listed on your résumé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When does the student begin the application process?</td>
<td>It is recommended that the student plan at least six months of preparation time. Summer internships are more competitive, and application deadlines may be as early as October.</td>
<td>It is recommended that the student plan as much time as possible. Summer internships are more competitive, and application deadlines may be as early as October.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the student have to speak to someone at ECU in order to participate?</td>
<td>Yes. Students should check the eligibility requirements for their major to determine if they qualify and meet the departmental standards. Review the departments’ Internship web information BEFORE beginning the search.</td>
<td>No. It is recommended the student schedule a meeting with a staff member of the ECU Career Center about making the most of the opportunity before beginning the experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a process to complete prior to beginning the internship for ECU?</td>
<td>Yes. Students will need to complete the enrollment paperwork and possibly provide additional information to qualify the organization where they plan to intern. See the departments’ internship program contact for details.</td>
<td>No. Some employers may have forms for the student or the university to sign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a fee for me to participate?</td>
<td>Yes. The number of credits earned for the internship determines the costs. If completed during the semester, the cost will likely be absorbed into the full-time tuition cost. A small fee for liability insurance coverage may also be assessed.</td>
<td>No. Non-credit internships incur no fees as there is no academic credit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May students participate in more than one internship?</td>
<td>It depends on the specific departments academic requirements. Visit with departments’ internship contact to determine the best option.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can students participate in an opportunity outside the U.S.?</td>
<td>Yes. Depending upon the major requirements, this may be an option. Students should plan a year in advance for an internship abroad.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Sample Student Self-Evaluation

**Student Name**

**Faculty Internship Supervisor**

**Organization / Company:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Self-Evaluation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strongly Agree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Agree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Neutral</strong></th>
<th><strong>Disagree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strongly Disagree</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was dependable and reliable at work</td>
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<tr>
<td>I arrived at work on time</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was receptive to learning new things</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was accepting and responsive to feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>I conducted myself in a professional manner</td>
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<td>I worked to my highest potential</td>
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<td>I displayed a positive attitude</td>
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<td>I took initiative in my work</td>
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<td>I was friendly and courteous to others</td>
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<tr>
<td>I contributed to the team effort (when possible)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Evaluation of Work Site</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strongly Agree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Agree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Neutral</strong></th>
<th><strong>Disagree</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strongly Disagree</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My supervisor was available to me</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My co-workers were helpful and supportive</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt prepared for this position</td>
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<tr>
<td>My duties here increased my knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>My duties here were relevant to my major</td>
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<tr>
<td>My duties matched the original job description</td>
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<tr>
<td>I agree with my supervisor’s evaluation of me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this work site to another student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Be sure to leave room for comments, student signature and date**

Please take this evaluation seriously; it is an assessment of not only your performance, but also your work site. It will be used to determine the value of your work experience for future internship students. Check the box which best describes your experience.
Sample Employer

Intern Name: ________________________________________________________________
Organization: ______________________________________________________________
Site Supervisor: _____________________________________________________________
Faculty Supervisor: __________________________________________________________

Please write a short narrative with respect to the following items:

1. What type of work was assigned during the internship?

2. Was the student able to complete a suitable portion of the assignments? Were you satisfied with the students’ work? (If not, please explain.)

3. How would you rate the following skills as demonstrated in the assignments that the intern performed?
   Ranking: 1 – Excellent, 2 – Good, 3 – Fair, 4 – Poor, 5 – Not Applicable
   a. Research skills (ability to gather relevant information in a systematic manner):
   b. Analytical skills (analysis and application in a problem-solving situation):
   c. Written expression:
   d. Initiative:
   e. Personal organization:
   f. Dependability:
   g. Promptness:
   h. Reasoning and common sense:
   i. Quality of work:

4. Did the intern establish a good personal relationship with fellow workers?

5. What traits may be of particular help in future work experience?

6. What traits may hinder the intern in future work experience?

7. What is your overall evaluation of the intern (in terms of adaptability, competence, personality and general skills)?

8. Would you like to employ another East Carolina University student intern in the future?

9. Overall/additional comments which we may use to evaluate the student intern.

Employer Name / Signature:

Date:
Minimum suggested length: 10 pages

STUDENT FINAL REFLECTION OF INTERNSHIP

1. Write a brief job description, including employer, location, tasks and type of setting.
2. How did you obtain your internship? Tips for other students?
3. Describe your on-the-job training/orientation.
4. What are the connections between what you learned on the job and what you learned in the classroom? Highlight contributions of course work in major to work experience.
5. Did your work experience affect the quality of your classroom work?
6. How does your internship relate to what you want to do after graduation?
8. What skills did you acquire/enhance on the job? How did this experience stretch you?
9. What did you contribute to the organization (company)?
10. What difficulties or problems did you encounter?
11. Describe the culture of the organization - dress, level of formality, physical structure of offices, staff meetings, hierarchy, worker input in decision-making, reward system, etc.
12. Is the percentage of women, minority and disabled employees in your organization representative of the community population? Have you observed any discrimination in your work setting? If so, how did you feel and respond?
13. What did you discover about your fit in this type of career or organization?
14. What changes did you see in yourself or the organization as a result of your experience?
15. Describe the management style of your supervisor. What style do you prefer? How did the leadership style affect employee morale?
16. How valuable was the experience? What were the payoffs for you?
17. What recommendations would you make to improve the experience?
18. As a result of the work experience, do you still plan to pursue the same career goals? Why or why not?
Acknowledgements and Resources

National member organizations can offer excellent assistance. The following organizations and individuals have provided valuable assistance in the development of this employer guide:

**National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)**
62 Highland Avenue
Bethlehem, PA 18017-9085
800.544.5272
www.naceweb.org

**Cooperative Education and Internship Association (CEIA)**
16 Santa Ana Place
Walnut Creek, CA 94598
800.824.0449
www.ceiainc.org

**National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE)**
515 King Street, Suite 420
Alexandria, VA 22314
703.706.9552
www.nsee.org

**Weighart, Scott, Exceeding Expectations, Mosaic Eye Publishing, 2006**
16 Crowninshield Road
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