

Preparing for your Extern

You've decided to make a difference in one (or more) of our Virginia Tech students by becoming an Externship sponsor. Now, what do you need to do to help ensure that this is a quality experience for not only your student but for yourself?

Sponsor Registration

The first step you will need to take is to complete the online sponsor registration on Hokies4Hire: <http://www.career.vt.edu/Externship/SponsorRegistration.htm>

Registration instructions are available at the above link.

When completing your Externship position information consider the following:

- The more open you are the greater chance we will have to match you to a student. Allowing all class levels or multiple majors to apply for your position, should give you a wider variety of students to choose from. Remember that some students may want to participate in the Externship Program before making the decision to change their major. Therefore, the student may not be in the “right” major now, but is considering making the move. This is why we ask students why they are applying to a particular experience; to assist us in the matching process.
- On the other hand, if you know that you do not wish to sponsor students outside of a particular major, below a certain GPA, or below a particular academic level, make sure this is specified on your application. We work hard to make “best fit” placements, and this assists us in the matching students to you.
- When completing the section on desired majors, please note that you may select multiple majors.
- If you would like to review the applicants for your positions, be sure to mark this option on the application. This does not mean that you will select your own students, but it will give you the opportunity to give us feedback on your preferences. We use your feedback, combined with student preference, when making our decision
- Once you have submitted your application, you may still go back in and make changes.

You will be notified of who your students are by April 22, 2011.

What Now?

We will be notifying you and your student(s) of the match by Friday, April 22, 2011. Students will be provided with your contact information and are asked to contact you by Friday, April 29 to set up the details of the externship. At this time, they will be providing you with a list of 10 questions they would like answered while at the externship. If you prefer these questions be sent to you via email, just let them know during the phone conversation. If you know that you will be out of the office during the first week of December, let Julie Mills know so your student(s) may be informed. She can be reached at (540)231-8097 or julie.mills@vt.edu.

Why don't you have the student e-mail me rather than call?

The reason we have the students contact you via telephone initially is because many students are intimidated by "verbal" phone conversations, especially with employers. Even though e-mail can be an easier method of contact, phone skills are important in the student's development.

This initial phone conversation will give you the opportunity to discuss the externship and expectations. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- What will I get to do on the externship?
- How should I dress?
- Where do I need to go and what time should I get there?
- Is there anything I need to bring with me? (students are told to bring their lunch or money for lunch, paper, & pen)

Other considerations you will want to mention:

- Let the student know if they will be meeting/working with a person other than you. Be sure to include his/her contact information and whom the student may contact if the contact person is not present for some unexpected reason.
- Inform the student of the hours he/she will be at the externship in case the student is utilizing alternate transportation methods.
- Be sure to let your student know of any security measures that need to be taken (i.e. no camera phones, cameras, no open toe shoes, etc.)

Preparing for your Extern(s)

The key to a successful externship is being prepared. Of course this is twofold; we will do our best to prepare our students for the event and encourage them to do their research. Below you will find a couple of questions to assist you in the development of your experience:

What will you do? Here is the big question!!! One way to avoid potential lulls is to set up an itinerary for each day the student(s) will be with you. This will help to ensure that you stay on track and have adequate activities planned. Be sure to provide a copy of the itinerary to your student(s) and any employers who may be assisting you with the externship.

Below are some sample activities you may want to consider:

- Arrange for a tour of your facility
- Set up informational interviews with various people in your organization. Not only will this allow the student to get a feel for a variety of positions (& network), but it will allow you some time to yourself. If you decide to set up interviews, please explain to your co-workers why the student is here and offer to give topic suggestions and guidance.
- Let the student sit in on actual meetings. Even though meetings may not be the highlight of your day (of course they could be), this is new to your student and reflects the real world.
- Have a simple project set up that your student can assist you on. Students love to feel that they are doing something to contribute, and the externships with the most positive feedback are typically ones where the students get involved. If you don't have any projects going on, ask around and see if any of your co-workers could use their assistance or mind being observed.
- Other ideas: let them assist you with office tasks or reports, have them interact or observe interactions with clients and customers, set up a get together with interns/co-ops/new college hires (possibly at lunch time or for an afternoon break.)

Who's going to be working with the student? In some situations, you may not be the person who will actually be conducting the externship. Perhaps you are in HR and are placing students to work with other individuals. If this is the case, please make sure your employees are prepared! We have had several situations in which students were placed with individuals who ¹ did not know what an externship was and ² had no idea what to do with the students. **If you will not be overseeing the student directly, please provide the supervisor with Externship material.**

Getting the Most Out of Your Extern Experience

Not only does the student benefit from the extern experience, but you and your organization can benefit too. Use this opportunity to gain feedback from your student(s) by asking questions. Learn about their academic program and what is being taught at Virginia Tech. Find out about his/her thoughts on your organization. We send students and sponsor a follow-up questionnaire after the experience in order to improve our program. You are welcome to ask your student to complete a questionnaire to assist you as well.

Stay in Touch

If you enjoyed working with your extern(s) and feel that he/she has potential in your career field, we encourage you to leave open the lines of communication. Although it is not a requirement, some extern sponsors continue to offer guidance and assistance to their externs. If you do not mind answering occasional questions or providing feedback, be sure to encourage your student to contact you should such an occasion arise.

A Final Note

Thank you for becoming an Extern Sponsor for the Externship Program through Virginia Tech Career Services. If you have any questions along the way, please feel free to contact Julie Mills at (540)231-8097 or julie.mills@vt.edu. In return, we would appreciate being notified of any positive or negative experiences/feedback pertaining to the program and our externs. If you do not hear from your extern by the specified deadlines or if he/she acts inappropriately, it is important for you to contact us immediately, so we may address the situation. We expect that your experience with the program will go smoothly, and we rely on your prompt feedback if this is not the case.

Last year over 95% of sponsors surveyed stated that the experience was beneficial, and they intend on sponsoring again in the future.

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<http://www.career.vt.edu/Externship/Welcome.htm>