Experiential learning is an important component of a student’s education that helps prepare them for seeking opportunities after graduation. By participating in an internship a student can be helped in determining which career path to follow (or not!). An internship is a professional position and is not meant for menial work. Internships should be a win-win situation for both the organization and the student and must be fulfilled so as to protect the legal rights of both.

Internships are a partnership between an organization and the Departments of the School of Sciences & Mathematics (SSM) of the College of Charleston. Organizations can benefit by bringing in for short periods of time our students who are full of energy, ideas, passion, and knowledge, who can diversify your workplace, ease workloads, and advance projects important to the organization. It is also a way to easily identify students who you might want to employ after they graduate. Students may receive formal or informal academic credit for their internship by fulfilling the objectives of their learning contract they have made with faculty sponsor.

The SSM Departments offering opportunities for internships are Biology, Chemistry & Biochemistry, Computer Science, Geology & Environmental Geosciences, Mathematics, and Physics & Astronomy.

CRITERIA FOR SPONSORING AN INTERNSHIP (as developed by NACE- the National Association of Colleges and Employers)

- 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.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
- The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
- There are clearly designed learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student’s academic coursework.
- There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of experience.
- There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.

PROCESS

1. Identify an Internship Coordinator within your organization- This person will be responsible for completing preparatory work in anticipation of hiring an intern and will be the go-between the organization and the SSM department.
2. Assess Internal Needs to see how to best utilize an intern.
3. Set Goals and Develop A Position Description for the potential intern.
4. Allocate Resources (Financial, time, and material resources)
5. Identify a Mentor/Supervisor - This will be the day-to-day person supervising the intern with an intimate knowledge of the project.
6. Meet with SSM Departmental Internship Coordinator - To work out details of the internship and to assist in recruiting students.
7. Recruit, Select, and Interview Candidates
8. Formalize the Internship - Sign a contract with the student specifying start and stop dates, hours, compensation, and responsibilities
9. Conduct an Orientation to include Safety Training as well as HR (e.g. sexual and other unlawful harassment) and legal (e.g., non-disclosure) issues.
10. Monitoring and Supervision - The Mentor/Supervisor will train, supervise, communicate with, and evaluate the intern
11. Evaluating the Internship Program - This is done to make sure that the organization’s needs are being met and to see how improvements can be made to the internship program.

COMPENSATION
Do you have to pay the intern? The U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), as interpreted by the Supreme Court, provides criteria for what is and is not legal regarding payment for internships. Six criteria must be applied when determining if an internship can be unpaid:

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 experience is for the benefit of the intern;
3. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under 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.

On the other hand, students are trying to meet college expenses and appreciate the financial assistance that you provide.

AGREED TO AND ACCEPTED

___________________________________________  _______________
SSM Departmental Internship Coordinator                   Date

___________________________________________  _______________
Internship Sponsor                                           Date

___________________________________________  _______________
Student Intern                                               Date