AGRICULTURE INTERNSHIPS HANDBOOK

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Introduction

Internships are high impact educational experiences offered by the School of Agriculture (SOA) to prepare students for employment and advancement potential within the agricultural industry. Students majoring in Agribusiness; Environmental Horticulture; and Soil and Crop Science are required to complete at least one professional internship experience before graduation. While not required, students majoring in Animal Science and Reclamation, Environment and Conservation are strongly encouraged to complete at least one professional internship experience before graduation. Internships are partnerships between the student, employer, and the School of Agriculture as a representative of UW-Platteville. This partnership enriches the academic experience and differentiates internships from a typical summer job.

The purpose of this handbook is to outline the process for obtaining School of Agriculture Internships, clarify the academic requirements associated with internships, and to describe the responsibilities of each internship partner.

Purpose of an Internship

Internships are an important component of education that formally integrate professional career experience into the student’s academic program of study, allowing the student to apply theoretical principles learned in the classroom to every day practices in his or her field of study. Internships are vital to students by helping them develop a professional attitude, leadership skills and ability to work with others, as well as technical problem-solving skills. In addition, internships create opportunities for students to network and develop connections with professionals in agriculture-related industries, and give them an edge when looking for employment and negotiating initial salary offers. This high-impact experience is considered an integral component of the student’s education and he or she is awarded college credit for successfully completing the internship.

Student Eligibility Requirements

A student is eligible for an internship experience after completion of the following requirements:

- Currently enrolled in a program housed in the School of Agriculture (transfer students must be admitted to the university and enrolled for the semester that immediately follows the planned internship experience).

- Completed, or in progress (IP), at least 45 credits at the time registration for the desired internship course.

- Completed, or in progress (IP), at least 12 credits of coursework within their major before registering for the desired internship course.

- Student must be in good academic standing at the time of registration for the desired internship course.
• Obtain a position description from the prospective internship employer (supervisor signature required on the School of Agriculture Internships Approval and Work Agreement Form).

• Student discusses the position description with his or her advisor (advisor signature required on the School of Agriculture Internships Approval and Work Agreement Form).

• Submit a completed Internship Approval form and Work Agreement form to the School of Agriculture Internship Coordinator.

• Register for the desired School of Agriculture Internships Course (AGBUS 4580, AIET 4580, ANSCI 4580, ENVHORT 4580, SCSCI 4580 or RECLAM 4660).

• Attend a mandatory School of Agriculture Internships meeting before registering for the internship course. An announcement regarding the meeting date will be posted on the School of Agriculture Internships bulletin board and School of Agriculture website.

**Operation of the School of Agriculture Internships Program**

The School of Agriculture Internships is a college credit program. An internship must be a full-time position (40 hours per work week) and the student must work for a minimum of 10 weeks (a minimum total of 400 hours). However, the employment duration and hours may be structured to satisfy the needs of the employer.

**University Credit**

Students enrolled in the program are required to register for three (3) credits. A maximum of 6 credits may be obtained for situations in which students work for summer and one semester, or about six (6) months. Students may not earn more than nine (9) credits of internship during their academic career. The credit decision will be determined by the School of Agriculture Internship Coordinator in consultation with a faculty member with expertise in the academic program. Registration for the appropriate internship course (AGBUS 4580, ANSCI 4580, ENVHORT 4580, SCSCI 4580, or RECLAM 4660) is required to receive college credit, and students will only receive credit for an internship in the academic session during which the work is completed.

**Obtaining an Internship**

Students are responsible for identifying and applying for an internship position. Students may identify an internship position by working with the Pioneer Career Network (PCN) or through other sources (e.g., previous employers, employment fairs, corporate talent acquisition agents, academic advisor or School of Agriculture Internship Coordinator). The PCN is a web-based resume database and job posting software program, supported by UW-Platteville, which allows students to post their resume on the PCN website and review corporate internship postings relevant to their career. In addition, printed copies of all internships received by the School of
Agriculture are maintained in the main office. Furthermore, announcement of potential internships are posted on the School of Agriculture Internships bulletin board in Russell Hall.

It is important that students maintain a current copy of their resume and write letters of application unique for each position. Students should seek assistance from their advisor and PCN for preparing application materials.

Students should search for college level internship positions related to their academic program and career objectives, and apply to prospective employers as directed by the company’s application instructions. Students are encouraged to seek internship opportunities with employers of businesses or farms not affiliated with members of their immediate family. However, exceptions may be granted by faculty advisors or the School of Agriculture Internships Coordinator.

Following the interview process, employers may make offers for employment directly to prospective student interns. However, the position must be approved by the School of Agriculture Internship Coordinator before the student can register for university credit. Students must follow the steps outlined in the section “Registering for an Internship” to initiate the internship approval process and qualify for university credit.

**Registering for an Internship**

Once the student accepts an offer of employment the steps outlined below should be followed when registering for the School of Agriculture Internships Program.

1. Read the School of Agriculture Internships Handbook. Information in this handbook is applicable to all internship courses in the School of Agriculture. The handbook is available on the School of Agriculture website. A printed version is available in the School of Agriculture Office.

2. Obtain and complete the Internship Approval and Work Agreement Form. Copies of the form may be obtained from the School of Agriculture website. A printed version is available at the School of Agriculture Office. A position description outlining the duties and responsibilities of your internship printed on company letterhead, or signed by the supervisor if letterhead is not available, must be attached to the form. Once you have the description, get your advisor’s signature.

3. After your advisor signs the Approval and Work Agreement form, bring the completed form and position description to the School of Agriculture Office. It is important that the student select their preferred method, oral or poster, for the final presentation before delivering the Internship Approval and Work Agreement form to the School of Agriculture Office.
4. The secretary will verify your information and obtain the School of Agriculture Internships Coordinator’s signature. The secretary will then enter the permission for you to register and send you an e-mail notifying you that the permission was entered and you are able to register.

5. Once you have registered, the Business Office will charge your account.

6. Full-time student status: Students with scholarship or financial aid are not required to maintain full-time status for internships conducted during the summer months. However, full-time status may be necessary for students with scholarships or financial aid when completing an internship during the regular fall or spring semesters. In this situation it is the responsibility of the student to contact the School of Agriculture office to request that their internship be considered for full-time status.

7. Begin work and have an excellent internship experience!

Responsibilities of Student Interns

Student responsibilities begin long before employment commences. Students are expected to provide leadership not only in identifying, obtaining approval, and registering for credit, but also for successfully completing all the expectations and requirements outlined by the employer in the position description and the University of Wisconsin-Platteville School of Agriculture for receiving credit. The information below outlines the responsibilities required by the School of Agriculture for receiving academic credit from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

Intern Responsibilities before Beginning Employment

Accepting an internship offer is a serious commitment and should not be taken lightly. Employers invest significant time and resources recruiting interns and expect students to honor their commitment for employment. The university also invests significant time and resources recruiting prospective employers and building working relationships. Employers and the university alike expect student interns to honor their agreements for employment. Therefore, students should only accept offers of employment to which they are seriously committed.

Intern Responsibilities while Employed

While on the job the student intern is regarded as a regular employee of the firm and responsible for complying with all regulations, safety procedures and legal requirements established by the company. Interns are expected to act in a professional manner and respectful of other employees. Conduct unethical or undesirable exhibited by the intern while employed may result in dismissal from the program and company.

Interns should receive monetary remuneration comparable to other employees of similar experience and seniority when employed by a “for-profit” company as described in Fact Sheet
#71: Internship Programs under the Fair Labor Standards Act published by the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division. Volunteer internships will be allowed in cases in which students are employed by “not for-profit” organizations. However, interns should recognize the importance of the experience and the knowledge gained as more beneficial than monetary compensation.

Interns must assume the responsibility of informing the internship coordinator or faculty evaluator of any problems or difficulties that develop during the internship. The intern maintains an obligation to the University and School of Agriculture to be an emissary of good public relations with the firm and its employees.

**Internship Assignments**

Student interns are required to complete bi-monthly reports, provide leadership for the internship evaluator site visit, and complete a final presentation. In addition, student interns are responsible for working with their supervisor to ensure completion of employer mid-term and final evaluations. The specific requirements of each assignment are described in the paragraphs that follow.

**Bi-monthly Reports**

Interns are required to outline the duties and responsibilities performed during the work period as well as describe how these activities related to the intern’s previous coursework and career objectives. Interns must complete four (4) bi-monthly reports during the internship period. Interns must use the “Bi-monthly Report form.” Completed forms must be submitted to the course Desire2Learn site by the first (1st) and sixteenth (16th) of each month. Bi-monthly reports will be graded by the Internship Evaluator and will comprise a maximum of 20% of the intern’s grade.

**Internship Evaluator Site Visit**

Each intern will be assigned an internship evaluator from among the School of Agriculture faculty and staff. These assignments are based on faculty interest and technical specialty. At least one visit will be made to the firm when the worksite is within a reasonable driving distance from the University (i.e., 300 miles). Contact with interns that are located more than a reasonable distance from Platteville is to be conducted by phone. The on-site visit or phone call should be made after the mid-term evaluation has been submitted (usually early August for summer internships).

During the on-site visit, the internship evaluator meets with the intern and his or her supervisor. In most cases, the internship evaluator meets with each party separately at first to determine strengths and weaknesses of the intern and program. The student intern is responsible for providing leadership for the organization and execution of the Internship Evaluator Site Visit.

The intern should organize the following activities for the site visit:
• Work with the employer and internship evaluator to establish the date and time of the site visit
• Organize a meeting of the intern supervisor and intern evaluator to discuss the intern’s job performance and progress
• Organize and lead a tour of the firm for the intern evaluator highlighting the types of work being done by the intern.

Following the site visit, the internship evaluator records his or her comments regarding the intern and employer and submits these to the internship coordinator. Twenty (20) percent of the internship grade is determined by the faculty evaluator from the personal visit and follow-up phone call.

**Employer Evaluations**

An integral component of the internship is the evaluation of the intern by the firm supervisor. Two evaluations will be conducted by the intern supervisor.

The first evaluation will occur at the mid-term point in the internship. In this evaluation the employer is asked to provide a mid-internship evaluation of the intern’s general job performance as well as the intern’s strengths and suggestions for professional development. Completed forms must be submitted to the course Desire2Learn site by the midpoint of the semester. Interns are responsible for working with their supervisor to ensure that the employer mid-term evaluation is completed in a timely manner. Employer mid-term evaluation will comprise a maximum of 10% of the intern’s grade.

The employer will complete the “Final Intern Evaluation” during the final weeks of the internship period. In this evaluation the intern supervisor will evaluate the intern’s competencies in the academic program’s student learning outcomes at the beginning and end of the internship period. The supervisor will also be asked to evaluate the intern’s general job performance as well as the intern’s strengths and suggestions for professional development. It is recommended that the intern and firm supervisor discuss the final evaluation. Completed forms must be submitted to the course Desire2Learn site before the end of the semester. Interns are responsible for working with their supervisor to ensure that the employer mid-term evaluation is completed in a timely manner. The employer final evaluation will comprise a maximum of 20% of the intern’s grade.

**Final Student Evaluation**

Another integral component of the internship is the student’s evaluation of the experience. Each intern will complete the “Final Student Evaluation” during the final weeks of the internship period. In this evaluation the intern will self-evaluate their competencies in the academic program’s student learning outcomes at the beginning and end of the internship period as well as describe what they have learned from the experience. Completed forms must be submitted to the course Desire2Learn site before the end of the semester. The student final evaluation will comprise a maximum of 10% of the intern’s grade.
Final Presentation

Each intern is required to give a final presentation describing their internship experience. Students will be required to deliver their final presentation using an oral or poster format. Students must their preferred presentation format when completing the School of Agriculture Internships Approval and Work Agreement Form before registering for the internship experience.

Regardless of the presentation type, each intern should provide the following information:

- An overview or brief history of the company
- Products produced or services provided to the client
- Intern’s position and responsibilities
- Assessment of how the duties and responsibilities related to our college curriculum as well as their value in preparing students for professional career positions
- Outline how you obtained the information regarding the internship experience

Dimensions of posters will be limited to a 4 x 4 foot area, and suitable for display in a large room. Interns will be required to stand by their poster for a designated period of time, and be prepared to discuss their experience with students as well as university faculty, staff and administrators.

Oral presentations should be prepared using Microsoft PowerPoint and suitable for presentation in a classroom setting. Presentations should be approximately 10 minutes and allow an additional two minutes for questions. Interns should provide an outline of their presentation to their internship supervisor and gain approval from the company well in advance of the final presentation night.

Intern presentations will be scheduled in conjunction with the “Career Fair” sponsored by the UW-Platteville Pioneer Career Network. The exact date and time will be specified before registration for the internship experience. The final presentation is worth 20% of the internship grade.

Grading Information

The A through F, plus/minus grading system will be used for evaluating the student’s internship performance. Most intern assignments and evaluations will be completed during the student’s internship work period. However, because the final presentation will typically be conducted after grades are due to the UW-Platteville Registrar’s Office, students will be assigned an incomplete (I) until evaluation of the Intern Final Presentation is completed. Once the intern has completed all requirements for the internship, the Intern Evaluator will provide the final grade to the School of Agriculture Internship Coordinator who will complete a change of grade.
and deliver it to the Registrar’s Office.

Internship evaluators use the following to determine the intern’s grade:

1. Bimonthly progress reports (20%)
2. Employer mid-term evaluation (10%)
3. Intern Evaluator site visit (20%)
4. Employer Final Evaluation (20%)
5. Student Final Evaluation (10%)
6. Intern Final Presentation (20%)

Final internship grades will be determined using the scale below.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Comprehension:</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Point</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% to 100%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88.5% to 89.9%</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87% to 88.4%</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80% to 86.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.5% to 79.9%</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77% to 78.4%</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70% to 76.9%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.5% to 69.9%</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67% to 68.4%</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% to 66.9%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.9% and Below</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employer Information and Responsibilities

An internship is a flexible program that benefits the employer as well as the student intern. There is no written agreement between UW-Platteville and the employing company. The Work Agreement form is used only by the intern and School of Agriculture Internships Coordinator as a “contract” for university credit.

Advantages of hiring Student Interns

The internship is an on-the-job training assignment that integrates the concepts from formal course work with practical experience. Students apply directly to the employer and interns are selected based on the company’s needs. Other benefits of employers hiring student interns include:

1. Interns are generally highly motivated, intelligent and eager to learn. In addition, interns are very dependable and aspire to obtain permanent employment. Employers consider interns to be “high yield” employees with a level of enthusiasm that is contagious and motivates the company’s permanent workforce.

2. Interns allow employers to management their workforce more efficiently. Interns can be hired to perform routine, incidental, and less demanding assignments which provide release time for the company’s permanent workforce.

3. Hiring interns can provide an opportunity for employers to experiment with new positions without making an expensive, long-range commitment.

4. Interns may be hired to fill a seasonal or temporary need for skilled personnel.

5. Interns can provide full-time, part-time, intermittent, or continuous coverage of positions throughout the year.

6. Internship programs provide employers an effective and economical way to recruit new talent through students that have completed work experience with the business.

7. Graduates with internship experience require less job orientation and training, have reduced turnover rates, are more loyal, and progress faster and further than employees that did not complete an internship experience.

8. Interns bring new knowledge and fresh ideas into the company which can be used by the employer to update their workforce.

9. Internships provide opportunities for companies to become more recognized on campus through the recruiting process, by interns praising the company’s willingness to work with and train students, and by interacting with faculty and staff that serve as internship
evaluators.

10. Internships improve the relationship between the academic instructors and their peers in industry.

**Employer and Intern Relations**

In all cases, the intern is considered to be an employee of the company or organization, and is responsible for performing the assigned duties in a satisfactory manner. All company regulations, conditions of health and safety, and legal requirements apply. It is the employer’s responsibility to ensure that interns receive proper training in the aforementioned topics. Based on this assumption, any company policy violations should be addressed as if the intern is a permanent employee. All monetary remunerations should be comparable to employee’s assigned similar duties and with equivalent experience and seniority.

Interns are also considered a student of UW-Platteville and he or she is subject to all applicable regulations. This being considered, there is a student-instructor relationship with the university as well as an employee-employer affiliation. These relationships should co-exist and not interfere, resulting in an amicable arrangement of benefit to all parties.

**Procedures for Advertising an Intern Position at UW-Platteville**

Employers should advertise their internship positions directly through the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Prospective employers are encouraged to register and advertise their position with the Pioneer Career Network (PCN). Information to register your business and advertise position information can be found at the PCN website [http://www3.uwplatt.edu/career-center/career-information-employers](http://www3.uwplatt.edu/career-center/career-information-employers). Employers may also contact the School of Agriculture office at soa@uwplatt.edu or (608) 342-1393 with their position information.

Regardless of the method of contact, prospective employers should be prepared to provide the following information:

1. Company name, address, and preferred contact information.

2. Position title, duties, and responsibilities.

3. Prospective start and end dates, including approximate work hours.

4. Minimum and preferred qualifications, including any special skill sets or physical requirements necessary to successfully complete the assigned duties and responsibilities.

5. Directions for submitting applications, including the time period during which applications will be accepted.
**Employer Responsibilities during the Internship Period**

The University of Wisconsin-Platteville School of Agriculture recognizes and thanks its industry partners that employ student interns for their gracious efforts to assist us in the development of a well-trained agriculture workforce. As an educational partner we recognize that there are certain educational experiences that are best delivered and assessed through internships. Therefore, in addition to providing high quality learning experiences, we request that employers assist in the evaluation of student learning.

**Employer's Midterm and Final Evaluations**

An evaluation of intern learning must be conducted to provide meaning to the program. Therefore, the intern’s immediate supervisor is asked to conduct two intern performance evaluations. The first evaluation will occur at the midpoint in the internship; around July 1, or mid semester. In the **Midterm Evaluation** the employer is asked to provide an evaluation of the intern’s general job performance characteristics as well as his or her strengths. Constructive feedback regarding areas of professional growth for the intern is also requested. Employers will also complete a **Final Employer Evaluation** during the last weeks of the internship period. In this evaluation the intern supervisor will evaluate the intern’s competencies in the academic program’s student learning outcomes at the beginning and end of the internship period. The supervisor will also be asked to evaluate student learning and the intern’s general job performance, as well as his/her strengths and suggestions for professional growth. It is recommended that the intern and firm supervisor discuss their final evaluation process.

Completed forms must be submitted to the course *Desire2Learn* site before the end of the semester. Interns are responsible for working with their supervisor to ensure that the employer evaluations are completed in a timely manner. The employer mid-term and final evaluations will comprise about 30% of the intern’s grade.

**Internship Evaluator Site Visit**

All interns are assigned an internship evaluator. This person is a member of the School of Agriculture faculty and staff and assigned based on the person’s technical specialty or availability. The internship evaluator will make several phone contacts with the supervisor and at least one site visit during the internship period as long as the worksite is within a reasonable driving distance from the University (i.e., 300 miles). The on-site visit or phone call should be made after the employer mid-term evaluation has been submitted (usually early August for summer internships).

The student intern is responsible for providing leadership for the organization and execution of the Internship Evaluator site visit. During the on-site visit, the intern and his or her direct supervisor, and other relevant company personnel, meets with the intern evaluator. In most cases, the Internship Evaluator meets with each party separately at first to determine strengths and weaknesses of the intern and program. This is an excellent opportunity for employers to ask questions or make suggestions that will improve the intern’s professional development and
effectiveness of the internship experience.

**Responsibilities of the School of Agriculture**

It is the responsibility of the School of Agriculture Internships Coordinator and the Internship Evaluator to assist the intern in fulfilling the objectives of the program. The School of Agriculture Internships Coordinator and members of the School of Agriculture Internship Committee are responsible to ensure that the program satisfies the academic requirements of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

The School of Agriculture and UW-Platteville are not obligated to provide employment for the student. In fact, most students are able to secure internship experiences on their own. The academic advisor and School of Agriculture Internships Coordinator may assist students with locating internship opportunities.

Once on the job, it is important that an open line of communication be maintained between the intern and their immediate supervisor with the Internship Evaluator. The intern may direct questions regarding issues related to the internship experience directly to the Internship Evaluator. All interns will be notified via email when the Internship Evaluators are assigned. In addition, a list of Internship Evaluators will be posted on the appropriate Desire2Learn site. Because the Internship Evaluator may not be assigned by the time that the internship period begins, the School of Agriculture Internships Coordinator may be consulted for questions. Any issues beyond the authority or availability of the Internship Evaluator will be addressed by the School of Agriculture Internships Coordinator.

The Internship Evaluator is responsible for recording and evaluating all assignments submitted by their assigned student interns as well as evaluations completed by intern employers. The intern’s grade is determined by the evaluation of information submitted by the student and employer as well as the Internship Evaluator’s site visit according to the guidelines outlined earlier in this handbook. Final grades are submitted to the Registrar’s Office by the School of Agriculture Internships Coordinator. In most cases, final grades are not available at the end of the semester. In these cases interns are given an incomplete (I) until the final presentations are evaluated.

**Conclusion**

Internships are valuable educational learning tools. In addition to bringing the academic curriculum to life and providing meaning to coursework, internships provide opportunities for student learning that cannot be provided in the classroom or laboratory. Internships also provide learning opportunities for university faculty and staff as well as company supervisors and their employees. Internships are definitely win-win-win opportunities.

For more information regarding School of Agriculture Internships, students should contact their academic advisor, the School of Agriculture Office, or the Agriculture Internships Coordinator. Have a great internship experience!