DEVELOPING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
(Brought to you by Pure Michigan and the Michigan Internship Initiative)

Step 1: Set Goals & Policies for Your Internship Program

What is the main goal of your company’s internship program?
- To market your organization and raise awareness of your organization to the community and potential customers?
- To create a talent pipeline?
- To fill short term capacity issues?

Once you establish the goal of your program and reason(s) for existence, you can get started by:
- Look at current business activities and consider what ongoing work you would like to expand or projects you would like to initiate or complete.
- Consider projects that are beneficial to your organization and provide challenging learning experiences for interns/volunteers.
- Examine your company’s recruiting needs (i.e. employees retiring, departments that are expecting growth, adding positions as a result of recovering from a recession, demand for new/emerging required skill sets, or positions that are difficult to recruit or hire for).

Who will supervise and mentor the intern?
Intern supervisors/mentors do not have to be the President, CEO or Human Resource (HR) Manager. In fact, very seldom are they the appropriate supervisors for interns. Top-level managers approve the establishment of an internship program, after which the HR department ensures that proper documentation and recruiting processes are in place, including job descriptions, work plans and confidentiality agreements. At that point, it can be up to various department managers to identify who will supervise/mentor the intern.

Recommended supervisor/mentor criteria:
- A supervisor should be selected because he/she likes to teach or train and has the resources to do so. The supervisor will help the intern keep their project on time and on budget.
- The mentor may be a department head, project leader, long-time employee or acting supervisor who is knowledgeable about the project on which the intern will work and can provide orientation and wisdom to the student.

Will you pay the intern?
- Determine ahead of time if you will be able to compensate your intern, and make it clear up-front.
- Compensation could be in the form of an hourly wage or a stipend. Be sure to incorporate a strong training component into your program; ensuring the presence of a training component will justify unpaid internships.
- In addition to, or in lieu of stipends or wages, you may also be able to provide funding for the student to go through training program(s). USDOL has outlined six criteria that for-profit companies must consider for clarification of unpaid internships.
- Please see the Liability and Legal Concerns section for more information on what may apply best in your case. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact Career Services.
- Also note that different majors/departments have varying requirements. Please see the Department Information section for more information.