

The Characteristics of a Successful Internship Program

What are the characteristics of a successful internship program? According to NACE's [*Building a Premier Internship Program*](#), among other things, there should be support for the program throughout the organization and a consistent, positive message throughout the intern's experience. Following are details about the characteristics of successful internship programs:

- **Buy-in at all levels**—Everyone involved—from the alum who attends the campus intern fair, to the recruiter in HR, to the hiring manager, to the mentor, and even the CEO who addresses the group at its farewell luncheon—has an effect on the student's experience in and impression of the organization. This makes it vital to the success of your program that everyone involved in the program supports its purpose and structure. Gaining buy-in at all levels is best done by program supporters at all levels. Take a look at your own organization and ask yourself, "Who touches this program?" and "Who is in the best position to gain support throughout each of these constituencies?"
- **Effective program design**—Your program will be more successful if you start with a solid infrastructure. This includes clear program goals and well-designed processes for sourcing, recruiting, and orienting students; converting interns to regular, full-time employees; and evaluating and improving your program.
- **Good selection**—If you start with high-caliber interns with the appropriate qualifications, your new grad recruiting goals will be much easier to meet. It starts with college recruiters who are very clear on the criteria for initial screening, and extends to the hiring manager and the interview team. [Your organization should] emphasize that the same standards used for new full-time hires must be applied to these students because converting them to such is the ultimate goal.
- **A consistent, positive message**—Just as it is important that your recruiters deliver a consistent message to all students at all campuses, so it is important that interns receive a consistent and positive message throughout their experience with your organization. This starts with and is ensured by proper orientation for the student, and for the manager and mentor at the beginning of the work term.
- **An effective intern-to-full-time conversion process**—If that's your bottom line, you'll want to have a process in place that guarantees that your beautifully designed and executed internship program will not fail at the final and most important step.