

BENEFITS FROM AN INTERNSHIP

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Internship and co-op experiences are becoming more and more common among college students and especially for those in agricultural and life science majors.

Many colleges and disciplines require an internship or co-op experience before graduation. In addition to completing requirements for graduation and possibly earning some extra income, there are many other benefits students should expect to gain from these experiences.

Each year AgCareers.com conducts an "Internship Analysis" from students who are spending their summer interning with an agricultural-related company. The survey gathers information from students during their first few weeks on the job and again at the end of the experience to gauge their expectations and perceptions of the internship.

This year over 600 interns were surveyed representing 14 major employers in the industry.

FINDING DIRECTION

Many students find themselves unaware of exactly what career path they want to pursue upon graduation, and are using an internship to help them determine what direction they want to follow. Twenty-seven percent of interns surveyed listed the number one reason they chose their internship was to gain insight into a full time career.

Ranking slightly higher is the 29% of interns who listed their number one expectation as gaining practical, meaningful, work experience. Rightly so, with the high demand and competitiveness that comes with obtaining an internship, students should expect to spend their time working on projects that will have an impact on the company and what the student learns from the experience.

Students should also expect to receive communication and follow up from the employer during the interview, hiring, and orientation process of the internship. Internships are designed to resemble what a full

time career with the company would be like.

Anyone interviewing for a full time position would expect to receive communication from the employer prior to the first day, expectations about their work/project responsibilities, location information and other details. The majority of interns surveyed listed giving them assignments and responsibilities as the number one thing employers can do to make the internship meaningful, followed by, providing preparation, training, communication, and feedback.

EXPECTATIONS

With all the benefits that come from having an internship, students should also keep their expectations realistic.

While the internship is designed to mirror a full-time career, there must still remain a dividing line between the two. Internships typically do not come with benefits such as insurance, 401k, paid vacation time and other luxuries

such as mobile phones and company vehicles. In the 2008 AgCareers.com "Intern/New Grad Benchmark Report," less than 1% of the 11 participating companies, representing over 300 interns, provided a mobile phone or a company vehicle.

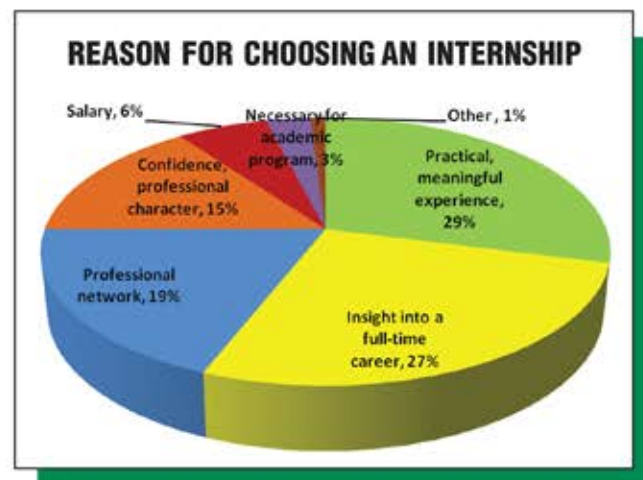
An additional benefit of the internship is for students to travel and experience new areas where they have not previously been exposed. Relocation can be a large factor when choosing a full-time career, and students will have no idea about their true desire to relocate unless they've had these experiences before.

Relocating for a full-time career obviously has more of a permanent connotation, whereas an internship will on average only last for 12 weeks.

Living in a different city or state for 12 weeks, often in communities with other interns, will help students determine if they are up to a similar challenge when a full-time offer is made.

Financially it can be a benefit as well. In the 2008 benchmark report, 81% of the companies who participated provided 100% of housing cost for their interns. This provides students with a much more cost effective opportunity to travel.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of having an internship is the challenge it will present. Being challenged to put your academic experience to



work and applying knowledge in a corporate atmosphere will teach students a lot about their own abilities. Being able to adjust from a college schedule to a full-time work schedule is an additional challenge.

Being placed in an atmosphere where four different generations are working together to accomplish a goal, can also be intimidating for the college student. Experiencing these challenges will provide students with soft skills that are in high demand from employers.

Being able to incorporate the skills learned in an internship, will come in handy during the interview process after graduation and even on into a first career, which is the greatest benefit students will gain from their internship experience.