Have you considered starting a sustainability internship but don’t know where to begin?

Or have you hired interns for years but know your program could benefit from better structure and planning?

This guide provides you with the necessary tools to confidently hire and manage interns from the School of Sustainability.
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Part 1: Internship Basics

Why Hire an Intern?

- Gain access to a year-round source of highly motivated pre-professionals.
- Bring fresh ideas and new approaches by gathering student feedback.
- Provide leadership opportunities for your employees through supervision and mentorship of an intern.
- Influence the education of future professionals in your field.
- Create positive press for your organization via student testimonials, brand recognition and peer-to-peer messaging.

- Help School of Sustainability students explore and/or confirm their career paths.
- A proven, cost-effect way to recruit and evaluate potential employees.
- Become involved in the success of Sustainability students and contribute to sustainability solutions.
What is an internship?
An internship is a planned learning experience that allows students to take the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom and apply them in a professional work setting. It is a carefully monitored, short-term, hands-on work experience in which students have intentional personal and career-related learning goals. Internships offer students the opportunity to learn from professionals and explore potential career options. At the School of Sustainability, internships for credit are combined with academic coursework that encourages critical reflection on the internship experience.

The School of Sustainability screens each internship carefully to monitor for a rich experience that directly focuses on an area of sustainability.

Students will have the opportunity to make an impact on the surrounding community, and may be exposed to many different areas and fields – enhancing their knowledge and experience! Internships occur during the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters, or for longer periods of time.

Key characteristics of successful sustainability internships:

1. Relevant experience and direct connection to sustainability issues that allows students to connect their coursework to real world application. Interns want to learn how the theories and sustainability problems they’ve learned about in their classes are being solved every day.

2. Provides substantive work, defined as long- and short-term projects or tasks that require skills in research, analysis, summarizing data, writing, presenting information visually and orally, bench-marking, brainstorming, investigating, planning, organizing, implementing programs and services, problem solving, thinking critically, influencing and persuading, and decision making.

3. Training and orientation for interns to the organization, department or team. During the first day or week, we expect someone to walk the interns around and introduce them to the team. Interns want to meet key players, as well as learn the structure and culture of your organization.

4. Supervision from a person experienced in the field that will meet or talk with the intern on a regular basis. The supervisor provides direct and constructive feedback so that students can learn and improve their performance. Interns thrive on feedback; the more specific and regular responses you provide the more you will get from the intern!

5. A structured experience allowing students to engage in larger, meaningful projects, and day-to-day workplace activities with minimal, if any, routine clerical work. Interns should be embedded in the professional environment, provided with space to work among your regular employees so they can be surrounded by professionals in their chosen and related fields. Some of the best learning comes simply from observing others!
Are you ready for an intern?
Some points to consider:

Internship Program Basics

**What are our overall goals for creating an internship?**

List a few of the day to day tasks or projects to which an intern could contribute:

**What are the potential learning objectives for the intern?**

Internal Leadership and Time Management

**Which departments or staff members could utilize and manage an intern?**

**How long will the Internship last? How many hours per week will the intern work?**
Tip:
Keep in mind the following additional populations outside of traditional students that may also be interested in your internship opportunity.

**Adult Students**
Adult students (ages 24+) value internships as a way to advance their career or transition into a new industry. These students can bring a wealth of past professional experiences to an advanced internship.

**International Students**
International students bring a unique global perspective to an organization. Visa sponsorship is not required to hire an international student as an intern. International students at Arizona State University are supported by the International Student and Scholars Office and should consult with their international advisor prior to engaging in an internship.
Compensation and Academic Credit

Is pay required?
The School of Sustainability encourages employers to offer paid internships whenever possible. The expectation is that for-profit or private companies will be able to provide financial compensation for an intern, based on the criteria outlined by the Department of Labor’s Fair Labor Standards Act pertaining to internships.

Government and non-profit agencies are not necessarily held to FLSA requirements, but are still expected by the School of Sustainability to provide a learning experience that benefits the intern. Care must be taken to ensure that if an internship is unpaid, it falls clearly within the legal guidelines that make it a learning experience and not a job.

Employers disclose the amount of compensation to the School of Sustainability, but the amount of pay varies from the Arizona minimum wage of $7.80 to the prevailing wage – for interns by field – of approximately $15.74, on average, per hour according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers. A competitive hourly wage for sustainability interns is currently between $12.00 – 15.00.

We strongly encourage employers to compensate interns for their work, as providing compensation for an internship will:

1. Employ interns who are more focused.
   Paying your interns enables them to more fully focus on the job at hand without the worry of meting financial obligations like bills, tuition, etc.

2. Attract more competitive and diverse candidates.
   Our experience shows us that paid internships result in a larger, more diverse applicant pool.

3. Receive a measurable return on investment.
   By estimating and sharing the dollar value an intern contributes to your organization, you can make a case for support with departmental managers.
If you are considering whether or not to offer an unpaid internship, it is required that the position meet the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division six-prong test for internships under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The following six criteria must be applied when making this determination:

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.
6. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

To ensure compliance with the FLSA and provide the best internship experience possible for our students, the School of Sustainability will not advertise any unpaid internships with for-profit/private organizations.

Is academic credit required?

Sustainability students are encouraged to do internships whether or not they pursue the internship for academic credit. All undergraduate students are required to complete at least one internship in order to graduate. Graduate students will often pursue internships for credit; MSUS students may utilize an internship as their culminating experience. If a student decides to receive academic credit a certain number of hours must be completed on-site:

Undergraduates = 135 worked hours total
Graduates = 160 worked hours total

Over the course of a regular, 15 week semester, this is approximately 8 – 12 hours worked per week. Interns will need your approval of their reported time. Our students are also required to take a course – taught by our internship coordinator – that runs throughout the semester of their internship. If a student wishes to receive academic credit, the Community Partners must complete all necessary paperwork to hire the student as an intern:

Student Placement Agreement
Educational Agreement
Internship Offer Letter on Organization Letterhead
Internship Description

Mid- and final evaluations of the student are also required. You will be provided with a copy of the evaluations by the School of Sustainability Internship Coordinator. We encourage you to discuss the key contributions and areas for development with each intern. All internship paperwork is included in this Guide for your reference.
Crafting an Internship Description: The Basics

Responsibilities and Position Description
- Describe day-to-day duties and tasks
- List specific responsibilities; keep in mind that internships should entail no more than 25% clerical work and no more than 5% sales-related work.

Qualifications
- Degree: are you willing to receive applications for graduate and undergraduate students? Do you want to allow all undergraduate students to apply, or just advanced level (junior or senior) undergrads?
- Years of experience: some students shy away from applying for internships that require experience because they aren’t sure if their experience applies. Consider how you want students to demonstrate their prior knowledge – will course work highlight this appropriately?
  - Many internships do not require previous experience; if this is true for your organization, state it.
- Skills and abilities necessary for the role. Do you need your intern to be able to interact comfortably with customers? Do you work with children? Are you looking for a certain level of ability to work independently?
- Level of technical knowledge needed. Do you want a student who is able to use GIS tools? Perform a life cycle analysis? Speak Spanish? Have a basic understanding of native Arizona plants?

Learning Objectives
Well-developed learning objectives are an integral part of providing a positive internship experience and demonstrate a well-organized and robust program. Consider addressing the following questions in your internship description:

- What are 2 – 3 projects in which the student will participate?
- What are 3 – 4 (hard and/or soft) skills the student will learn through this experience?
- How will the intern be supervised and mentored during the experience?
- Will the intern participate in company meetings, networking events or professional conferences?
- What sustainability projects and/or issues will the intern engage?

Timeframe and Compensation
- Since most students will participate in internships as part of their regular academic commitment, plan on tying your internship to ASU’s Academic Calendar.
- Specify when you’ll need your intern to work. Do you run during regular business hours? Are you looking for someone to work weekend events? Make sure to highlight these commitments.
- Make sure to identify the level of compensation you are able to provide and list it clearly.

Application Materials
Every part of the internship process is a learning experience for our students, including applying. As a general rule, we suggest that community partners request a cover letter and resume from applicants. Consider requesting:

- Information about relevant coursework
- Reasons for considering this particular internship and interest in the area
Sample Internship Posting

Sustainability Communications Internship

Company X is currently seeking enthusiastic and resourceful interns to work in its Sustainability Communications Department. (Provide brief description here of your organization) Working as an intern in the Sustainability Communications Department, you will be exposed to a variety of fields including advertising, copywriting, graphic design, direct marketing, print production, and public relations. You will also become familiar with sustainability metrics and indices, and how to communicate company sustainability benchmarks for public understanding. In addition to gaining valuable, hands-on experience in a fast-paced, exciting environment, you will also have the opportunity to request work projects in your particular area of interest.

Responsibilities include:
- Assist account executives with project management including the copywriting and editing of pieces focused on sustainability initiatives.
- Assist with publicizing and advertising company sustainability efforts.
- Market projects throughout various departments for approval.
- Research and respond to client inquiries regarding sustainability-related company initiatives.
- Attend and participate in industry creative development meetings.
- Identify sustainability initiatives within the company that can be expanded or improved.

Qualifications/Criteria:
- Junior or senior undergraduate
- Experience with Photoshop and InDesign is preferred
- Coursework relevant to corporate sustainability
- Timeframe for internship position: Fall semester
- Compensation: $12 per hour

Learning Objectives:
- How to create marketing materials with Adobe InDesign and Photoshop.
- Best practices for event planning and the opportunity to lead promotions for an event.
- Learn about the key role marketing and communications plays in helping support a company’s sustainability initiatives.
- Learn about the specific ways sustainability is communicated and marketed in the corporate environment.

Application:
- Send resume and cover letter to Ms. Sustainable Supervisor, Manager of Sustainability Communications: emailaddresshere. Please address your interest in this internship in your cover letter.

Tip:
Many students are intimidated by postings that list multiple software programs with no indication of the level of knowledge needed for the job. If you are seeking a specific technical proficiency, consider distinguishing between required knowledge versus what skills would be a “bonus.”

Best Practice Example:
Indicate specific technical qualifications for internship:
- Proficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Functional knowledge of Adobe Photoshop
- Experience with ArcGIS is a bonus!
Site Visits
In order to insure the high quality of the internships our students are offered, the School of Sustainability conducts regular visits to our Community Partner's facilities. When you begin the process of creating an internship with the School of Sustainability, the Internship Coordinator will meet with you and your interested staff at your location to review that you are prepared for an intern.

Subsequent site visits will occur during each semester in which you host an intern. The Internship Coordinator will meet with your intern and the intern's supervisor on site to review the job description, the work the internship has been doing, and the opportunities for development throughout the remainder of the internship experience. These are opportunities for our Community Partners to connect with and gain support from the Internship Coordinator, as well!

Internship Program Participants – Roles

Student
The School of Sustainability student is responsible for locating and securing the internship opportunity with or without university resources, ensuring that all necessary forms are completed and turned in to the internship coordinator and/or site supervisor prior to the internship's start date, representing ASU and SOS in the internship experience, and completing the academic coursework.

Internship Coordinator
The School of Sustainability internship coordinator develops partnerships with organizations and reviews proposals for rightness of fit in the internship program. The internship coordinator advises students on internship opportunities, capstone options, other real-world experiences and works with students to ensure that they are working the appropriate option into their academic plan of study. The internship coordinator serves as a liaison between the employer, student, the School of Sustainability and Arizona State University. The internship coordinator teaches/facilitates the academic/course components of internship and awards grades for the internship classes.

Community Partner
The site supervisor plans projects and learning outcomes with the internship coordinator and intern. The supervisor serves as the point of contact for the student and internship coordinator. The
supervisor completes mid-term and final evaluations of the intern’s performance for the SOS internship course.

**What We Will Not Approve**

With rare exceptions, we do not approve experiences as internships if they are:

- Sales-focused experiences.
  - The School does not permit positions which involve door to door solicitation. This policy is intended to promote safety and security.
- Experiences with organizations that have existed for fewer than five years.
- Experiences supervised by recent graduates or current students at any academic level.
- Experiences focused on manual labor (for example: working on a farm doing the work of weeding, planting, etc.).
- Experiences that contain more than 25% clerical work.
- Unpaid internships at for-profit companies.

Providers who do not fit our criteria can explore posting an opportunity through [ASU’s Sun Devil Career Link](#).
The Interviewing Process
The interviewing process gives employers the chance to set expectations and goals for the intern’s role within the organization. Be honest with the student about your expectations, company culture, and the internship responsibilities.

Pre-Interview: Reflection
Before you start interviewing, reflect upon the culture of your organization and the expectations of the student. Ask yourself the following questions.

What are the daily duties you expect the intern to accomplish?

How many hours per week would you like the student to work?

How will you measure your intern’s success?

Are you able to set a regular meeting with the student to give and receive feedback?

How can you enrich the student’s networking and professional development within the role?
During the Interview
Interviewing allows students the opportunity to share their accomplishments and ask questions about projects and training they will receive during their internship. Consider asking any of the questions below to ensure a candidate is the right fit for the internship.

Introductory Questions:
- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you choose to attend Arizona State University?
- Why did you decide to pursue a degree in Sustainability?

Employer/Job Related Questions:
- What do you know about this company/organization and what interests you the most?
- What would you like to know about our company/organization?
- Why are you interested in this particular internship?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contributing to our organization?
- What skills have you learned in your studies that may help you in this role?
- What do you think you can do for us that someone else can’t do just as well?

Exploratory Questions:
- Tell me about three accomplishments of which you’re most proud.
- Give an example of a group or collaborative project you completed.
- How did you contribute to the project’s success?
- Describe a time you worked on a project that was not successful. In what ways could you have contributed differently?
- What are your greatest strengths/skills?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- How would a friend describe you?
- What else do you think I should know about you?
- What questions do you have for me?

Post Interview:
Once you finish interviewing your candidate pool, reach out to the student to extend an offer. Set a timeframe for training and the length of the internship. As a next step, set a date for an official start day or due date for submitting hiring paperwork.

Be sure to follow up with other students who did not receive an offer to let them know the position has closed and thank them for their interest in the position.

Please notify the School of Sustainability’s Internship Coordinator when you have filed your position so we can update our postings.

Tip:
It is recommended that you do not extend the internship offer at the end of the interview as a student may feel obligated to accept the internship without reflecting on the expectations of the role. Wait until the next day to allow the student time to process your conversation.
Part 2: Mentoring an Intern

So you’ve hired a promising student intern. Now what?
In order to achieve a high-quality internship experience for the student and your organization, it is important to spend time preparing for the intern's arrival.

Successfully integrating your new intern will help maximize the internship for the student, as well as your organization.

Orientation: Be Prepared

☐ Send an email announcing the start of your new intern(s).

☐ Organize welcome lunch with manager or team/senior leaders.

☐ Block off 30 minutes to one hour to spend with the intern at the beginning and end of each day for the first week to check in.

☐ Set standards for intern lunch hours and breaks before your intern begins work.

☐ Prepare the intern’s work space, i.e. notepad, pen, highlighter, etc.

☐ Set up computer login and email account.

☐ Create and print an overall company calendar of events.

☐ Create a first day schedule broken down by the hour; print and place on desk.

☐ Decide ahead of time how you’d like the intern to report back to you when it comes to progress on assignments, or needing new assignments.

☐ Identify other members of the organization who might be willing to connect with the intern to help with professional development.
Provide an Orientation
During the intern’s first week, provide a thorough introduction to the organization, employees, quirks of the culture, unwritten rules (i.e. dress code, when to check in with the manager, break policy, cell phone use, etc.), and important people or resources. It may be helpful to create a presentation used to onboard all new interns. This presentation could include the history of the organization, mission, vision, goals, key employees with photos, title and tenure, company policies, etc. Remember to include information about the organization’s approach to sustainability – and try to make the presentation interactive and engaging!

Outline Responsibilities
Provide a clear outline of the intern’s daily/weekly/overall roles and responsibilities; this should be a reiteration of what was discussed in the interview process and/or delineated on the Intern’s Educational Agreement. Include deadlines and how much time should be delegated to each task.

You may feel like this is micromanaging your intern and you’d prefer to give your intern the latitude to explore and establish his/her own project. On the contrary: setting clear expectations for responsibilities will help your intern be more successful, especially early in the internship experience. Help your intern get comfortable managing the responsibilities before letting her/him identify different projects.

Tip:
When delegating projects to your intern, consider mixing short- and long-term projects. If the intern finishes a task early, she/he will have a long-term project on which he/she can take the initiative to continue.
Managing Your Intern

The intern’s supervisor should provide regular feedback on the intern’s work and ongoing support. We recommend the following best practice guidelines to provide a quality learning experience for your student intern.

**Communicate**

Communicate with your intern often, whether to provide feedback, offer training, or check in the intern’s progress. By keeping the lines of communication open, you will not only build trust, respect, and a positive relationship, but you will also learn how quickly projects are being completed.

**Mentor**

Schedule a weekly review meeting with your intern. For many interns, the most important and beneficial element of an internship is the mentoring they receive from their direct supervisor and colleagues. Mentoring is a critical and essential part of any internship experience, and an attribute that differentiates internships from part-time employment. Internships are an opportunity for students to learn professional behavior in the workplace. As a mentor, it is important to give your intern honest feedback on their professionalism and career preparedness.

**Integrate**

To foster learning outside of your intern’s job duties, bring him or her to meetings, conferences and networking events. Allowing your intern to gain a broader understanding of your organization and industry can help generate new ideas, and create a more meaningful experience.

**Connect**

Encourage your intern to develop relationships with employees outside of her or his immediate team or department. Suggest several people with whom the intern should initiate informational interviews. Helping your intern learn more about your organization, industry, and potential career paths through informational interviews not only will aid in their long-term professional development, it will make him/her a more effective and contributing member to your organization.

**Revisit Learning Goals & Objectives**

Periodically revisit the learning objectives established at the beginning of the internship. Discuss what the student has learned and how it can be applied in the future. Be sure to also provide timely feedback on performance, congratulate your intern on a job well done, as well as address areas for improvement and growth.

**Remember: This is Sustainability!**

Your intern may have ideas or suggestions that can improve the sustainability of your organization. Solicit this new perspective when you can!
Internship Wrap-Up
Successful internship managers and site supervisors not only train interns – they learn from them. Consider giving your interns a chance to provide feedback on their experience.

Exit Interviews
Give interns a chance to meet with you one-on-one to describe their favorite aspects of the internship and the biggest challenge on the job. Interns may also be able to provide suggestions on an opportunity for grown within the organization.

Wrap-Up Presentation and Celebration
As a final project, ask your interns to summarize what they learned. Many organizations will require interns to give a presentation of their work or findings at a staff meeting or an organized presentation. Inviting interns from different departments to present together gives interns the chance to see what other students did on the job. It’s also a great way for the entire team to understand how interns support the organization and allows the team to get together for a final celebration.

An easy way to achieve this is to support your School of Sustainability intern as he/she presents her/his internship experience at the annual School of Sustainability Open House. Each year, our students showcase their work in internships, workshops, their research, and course or club activities. All School of Sustainability community partners are welcome to attend!

Internship Testimonials
Peer messaging is a great way to promote your internship program to future interns. Ask out-going interns if they would feel comfortable providing a brief testimonial explaining what they learned from their internship experience. You may consider asking the intern if they would mind writing a blog post or newsletter article from their own experience. A “Day in the Life of an Intern” can be very insightful for other students.
Part 3: Getting the Word Out

Advertise Internship Opportunities

SustainabilityConnect

The School of Sustainability utilizes an exciting website, SustainabilityConnect, to advertise internships to our students, as well as other students across ASU’s four campuses who are interested in sustainability experiences. SustainabilityConnect houses internships, as well as research and volunteer opportunities that enhance our students’ sustainability learning and help connect community partners to students and potentially faculty/staff who are interested in helping solve today’s and future sustainability problems.

Each internship is screened carefully by the School’s Internship Coordinator prior to posting to ensure a fit for our program.

We also have various social media sites, a weekly newsletter that goes out to undergraduate students and a listserv for graduate students to advertise opportunities.
You may also consider the following active methods of engaging with School of Sustainability students:

**Company Presentation**
Students attend an information session hosted by your organization. At the end of the presentation, you can host a Q&A session. You may also be interested in connecting with our career development lecture series, [Sustainability After School](#).

**Host a Company Visit**
Set a date, and we can help you recruit students for a site visit. Consider having a Q&A session at the end of the tour or ask coworkers to explain their roles in relation to the company’s mission.

**Internship Fairs and Mixers**
Have an enthusiastic team member staff your table during ASU’s Career Fiesta or during a school mixer. Connect with [ASU Career Services](#) to coordinate your participation. You can interact directly with School of Sustainability students in a more informal setting on our campus.

**Join us for the School of Sustainability Open House**
Celebrate with our current students and interns at the annual spring School of Sustainability Project Showcase and Open House. Individual students, faculty, classes, and sustainability clubs share their achievements over the past year. Wrigley Hall opens its doors throughout the day, culminating in a reception in the early evening.
Need extra help?

For any questions about starting or strengthening an internship at your organization please contact

the Internship and Experiential Education Specialist at the School of Sustainability:

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