

Building a Successful Internship Program

Attract top talent and create lasting impact: A guide for employers

CORE PRINCIPLES

01

Define clear goals upfront

Establish measurable outcomes for the intern and your team before day one. Ambiguity leads to disengagement.

02

Assign a dedicated mentor

Pair each intern with a go-to person for questions and feedback—not just a manager, but a champion.

03

Give real, meaningful work

Interns thrive on ownership. Assign projects with genuine stakes, not busywork or coffee runs.

04

Onboard them properly

Set the tone for the entire program with a structured first week that introduces tools, colleagues, and culture.

05

Offer regular check-ins

Conduct weekly 1:1s to guide course correction and demonstrate genuine support for the intern's growth.

06

Build in learning time

Set aside time for skill workshops, lunch-and-learns, or shadowing senior staff across departments.



55% of IST students accepted a full-time offer from their previous internship company.

ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES

- ✓ Pay fairly—unpaid internships limit your talent pool
- ✓ Collect feedback throughout the program, not just at the end
- ✓ Celebrate and showcase intern contributions publicly
- ✓ Create networking opportunities with leadership
- ✓ Document everything: projects, wins, lessons learned
- ✓ Communicate conversion decisions early and clearly

Partnering with IST 495

The Internship Requirement

What employers need to know about IST's graduation-required internship program

IST 495 is a graduation requirement for most B.S. students in Penn State's College of IST.

Most students must complete at least one internship for academic credit before graduation. As an employer, hosting an IST intern means you're part of a structured, credit-bearing program managed by IST's Career Solutions Office.

WHAT QUALIFIES AS AN IST INTERNSHIP

240 Hours

Part-time or full-time, virtual or in-person. Minimum 240 hours.

IST-Related Work

Must connect to the IST curriculum: technology, data, systems, UX, etc.

Concurrent Credit

Students register for IST 495 during the same semester as the internship.

WHAT STUDENTS DO WHILE ENROLLED IN IST 495

- 1 Complete online coursework.** Internship assignments and reflections are required.
- 2 Obtain supervisor verification.** Your sign-off on hours and work quality is part of their grade.
- 3 Submit mid-point and final portfolios.** Students document skills gained and compile professional work samples.
- 4 Receive a grade.** IST 495 is graded pass/fail based on hours, deliverables, and supervisor feedback.

YOUR ROLE AS AN EMPLOYER PARTNER

- ✓ Post opportunities on Nittany Lion Careers
- ✓ Provide IST-related, substantive work
- ✓ Designate an on-site or remote supervisor
- ✓ Track and verify completed hours
- ✓ Allow flexible scheduling if part-time
- ✓ Provide feedback on intern's performance

CONTACT

BRIANNE LIPPERT

Employer Engagement and Partnerships
Career Solutions and Corporate Engagement
bek147@psu.edu | careers@ist.psu.edu | 814-865-4509



This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Penn State is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status. UBR IST 26-08