

# How to organize an internship program

Your next employees are looking for you!

**FIERF**  
**FORGING FOUNDATION**

# Why offer an internship?

Hiring an intern or co-op student may be one of the best investments you can make! Consider these benefits:

- Complete projects that full-time staff are not able to fit in their busy schedules; (Areas to consider include design, plant or industrial engineering; metallurgy lab)
- Identify high caliber candidates for future openings;
- Bring new and fresh perspectives into the organization;
- Create a 'buzz' on campus about your company.

## What are scholarship students saying about internship opportunities?

“I worked as a Quality Assurance Metallurgical Intern. I was exposed to the steel producing and mining industry. I was able to act as a valuable member on teams for trouble shooting. I gathered, accessed, and presented data using quality monitoring systems, Access, Excel and PowerPoint in order to move toward solutions. Engaging in engineering-based problem solving led me to take interest in the continual advancement of processes in order to strive for the greatest achievable product. Working in quality also gave me a chance to interact with customers and ensure that problems were addressed to meet specification.”

“I gained much more from this co-op experience than I expected. Not only did I improve my technical skills and learn how to create new procedures for collection and analyzing laboratory data, but I learned about the human aspect of being an engineer – the importance of connecting with and reaching out to others, asking for challenges and not being afraid of new ideas.”

## EXAMPLE TIMELINE

**October/November** – Contact the FIERF Office for information on Scholarship or Magnet School Students interested in internships; Contact FIERF Magnet School Professors or University Placement Offices to advertise your openings for the summer.

**December/January** – Screen and select interns based on the kind of student intern that would best fit within your organization; make offer to students; set beginning and ending dates, compensation and expectations.

**April** – Make last minute arrangements re: housing, where and with whom student will work.

**May/June/July** – Welcome student to plant; provide orientation and introductions to employees.

**July** – Continue to provide guidance and supervision in meaningful work/projects.

**August** – Have interns report their project activity to company; managers/staff provide feedback.

## MAKING THE MOST OF AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

**Plan Ahead** – Contact universities early to be sure to have the choice of the best students. This will also allow the student to visit the plant during spring break.

**Interview** – Know what you're looking for when you interview students for an internship and spell out expectations at that time – compensation, start and end dates, will a pre-employment physical be required, etc.

**Contact References** – Contact the student's references to learn about their performance capabilities.

**Job Description** – Provide clear tasks and meaningful projects. Solid work is achievable if the intern has clear tasks and meaningful projects. Give the intern one "longer" job to work on and write a report, as well as the normal jobs that support day to day operations.

**Expectations** – Be very explicit and clear as to safety issues, work schedules, lunch breaks, computer use/misuse and day to day details about the job. This is often the first-time interns have worked in an industrial facility so these issues need to be stated explicitly rather than assuming the intern will know them. Expose the intern to as much of an operational experience as possible.

## MAKING THE MOST OF AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

**Housing** – If interns live close to the plant, they can live at home and save money. If a student will need an apartment during the summer, the company should help locate one if the intern desires it.

**Provide a Mentor** – An experienced mentor, coach or manager who is available for questions, issues or problems is important to a meaningful and productive experience for the intern and employer. Mentors should interact with interns at least weekly. Set up periodic brown-bag lunches with executives from different parts of the company.

**Treat the Intern as an Employee** – The internship process is a time for your company to evaluate the intern for possible future employment at your company and a time for the intern to learn about your company and business. A good way to accomplish this is to show the intern what it is like to be an employee and observe their work ethic and abilities.

**Provide Feedback** – Set up periodic meetings with interns to give them a min performance review and establish expectations.

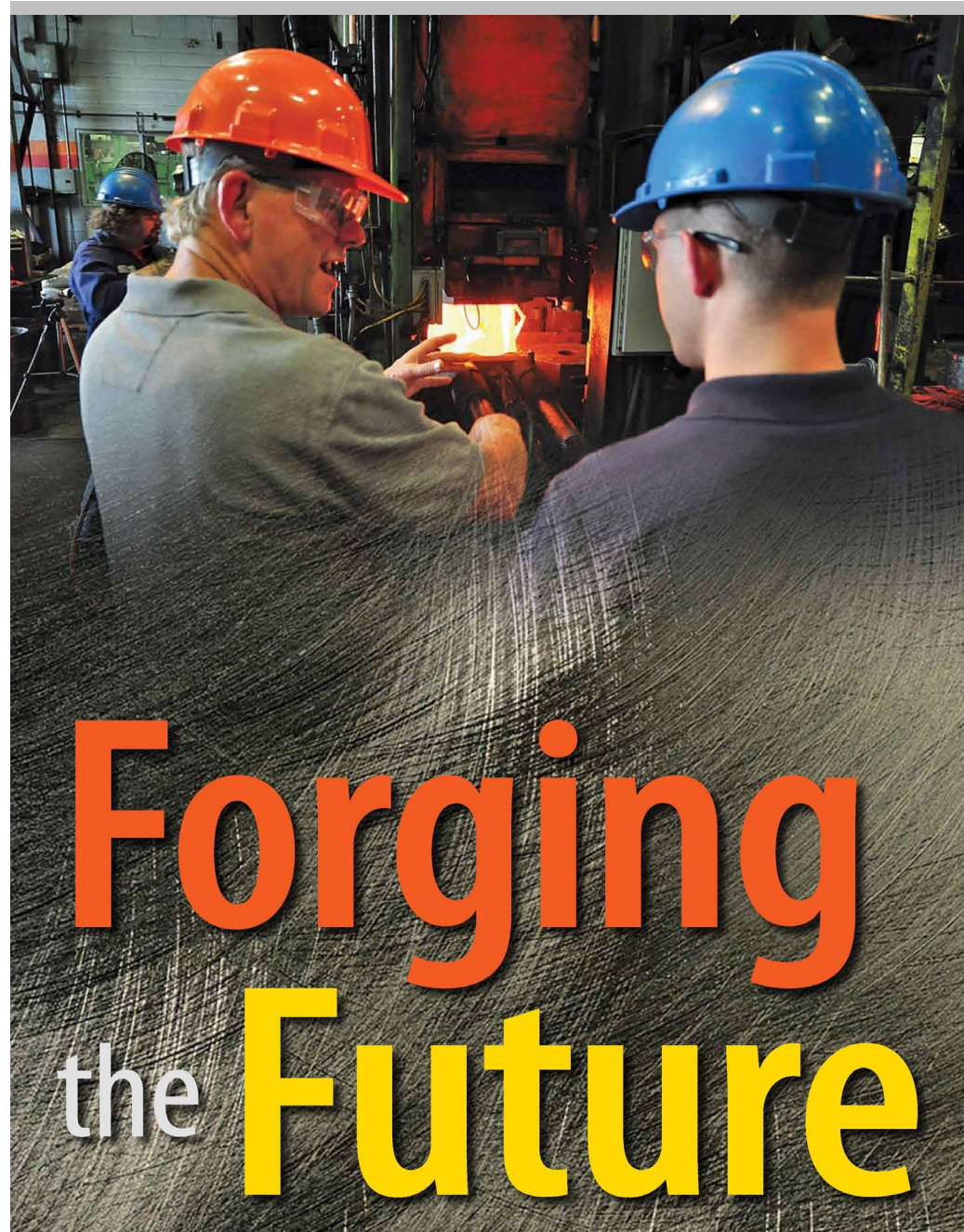
**Review** – A well structured review at the end of the internship by both the intern and the employer is crucial to tie together and evaluate the student and program.

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Forging Industry  
Educational &  
Research  
Foundation

6363 Oak Tree Blvd.  
Independence, OH 44131  
Phone: 216-781-6260  
[foundation@forging.org](mailto:foundation@forging.org)



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