

INTERNSHIPS: Learning goals

AN INTENTIONAL FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING is what distinguishes internships from jobs. Interns should be considered learners first and contributors second, regardless of whether they are earning credit associated with their internship. Below are some tips to help you facilitate intern learning through the use of learning goals.

IMPORTANCE

Co-creating learning goals with interns:

- > Signals that you **care** about their experience, which can increase their commitment, productivity, and desire to stay long-term
- > Helps ensure everybody is on the **same page**, resulting in a better experience for all
- > **Models** professional goal-setting, action-planning, and accountability
- > Most importantly, helps set the stage for **maximum intern learning**

FOCUS AREAS

Goals can focus on different areas:

- > **Skill** development
- > **Knowledge** acquisition
- > **Personal/professional** development

SMART GOALS

Effective goals share some commonalities:

- > **S** – Specific
- > **M** – Measurable
- > **A** – Action-oriented
- > **R** – Relevant
- > **T** – Time-oriented

Example SMART goals:

- > By the middle of my internship, I will be able to **write a 1-pg press release** using AP style
- > By July 30th, I will be able **to troubleshoot Microsoft Excel questions** with 97% accuracy
- > By week 5, I will be able to **identify 3 career paths** in this field & **1 way to learn** about each

TIPS

Goal-setting caveats:

- > Try to **avoid** broad goals like “understand” or “learn” because they cannot be easily measured
- > **Two or three** goals is typically sufficient for a quarter-long internship
- > Writing SMART goals may require several feedback and **revision loops**

PROCESS

Goal-setting is a process:

- > **Before an intern starts**, encourage them to think of a few potential learning goals
- > During the **first week**, schedule an hour with your intern to flesh out their goals in writing
- > Set up a **weekly** or **biweekly** time to check in
- > **After a few weeks**, meet with your intern about how they are progressing towards their goals, what action plan they have in place to achieve them, and how they might want to modify their original goals
- > At the **end of the internship**, review progress towards stated learning goals as part of a formal performance evaluation meeting

SMART GOAL PROMPTS:

- > What do you **specifically** hope to accomplish?
- > How will you **measure** your progress towards this goal?
- > What **actions** will you take to achieve this goal?
- > How is this goal **relevant** to your internship, academic interests, &/or career aspirations?
- > What is your **timeline** for meeting this goal?