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M.Kennedy Capstone

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Abstract

Accepted as an essential experiential learning opportunity in higher education intuitions, internships provide a number of benefits and challenges for the student, employer, and the educators. In this paper we review the impact internships have for students and employers, and the ways in which institutions can better support the partnership between the student and employer. The outcome of this work is a student-driven toolkit that aims to help students better engage in the intern process.

Introduction

There are few college graduates that have not either experienced first-hand or know of a friend that has experience a collegiate internship. Largely accepted as an expected experience in nearly every post-secondary, academic program, internships offer students to the opportunity to test drive a company, a specific field, or even the concept of reporting to a supervisor.

In a perfect world, internships are valuable for all parties involved as they can offer an avenue for an institution to business community pipeline for well-trained employees, streamline students into careers that make use of their degree, and increase the intuition's employability rating. In an imperfect world, stakeholders fall short of the expectations that they have on one another, students are left looking for guidance, employers are frustrated with unfinished tasks, and educators are exasperated about how to bridge the gaps.

This toolkit, still in its initial stages, will provide a workbook-like toll that can guide them through a series of cues, writing prompts, and activities to better prepare them for their internship.

Toolkit for Strong Internship Partnerships

Keene
STATE COLLEGE

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Section I

Making Your Internship Count

INTRODUCTION

Now that you have an internship, you are on the journey to develop skills that will help you succeed in your field!

In a perfect world, internships are valuable for employers, students, and institutions. These partnerships can offer an avenue for an institution to business community pipeline for well-trained employees, streamline students into careers that make use of their degree, and increase the intuition's employability rating. In an imperfect world, stakeholders fall short of the expectations that they have on one another, students are left looking for guidance, employers are frustrated with unfinished tasks, and educators are exasperated about how to bridge the gaps.

You are about to embark on an important journey. You have likely imagined what this experience will be like. Take a minute to describe what you think you internship will be like.

What will your workday look like?

Who are the people you will interact with?

How do you think you will be supported?

What will be the most challenging?

What do you think you can offer to the internship site?

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent. National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)

Other types of Experiential Learning

Apprenticeship: Combines competency-based, face-to-face learning for the unique outcome of a potable, nationally recognized credential in a particular field. Traditionally art, or trade related, the student is hired by the organization and is provided with on-the-job training and nuanced instruction specific to the field.

Cooperative Education (co-op): Provides students with alternating periods (often 3-6 months) of employment that align to their field of study or career ambitions with periods of academic study. Co-op sites hire the student as an employee, meaning that all employment laws apply to all aspects of the agreement.

Service-learning.*:* Marries academic and discipline-based, theories with "real-world" public service outcomes and activities. These types of opportunities allow students to apply current and emerging skills, abilities and knowledge to realistic civic needs (Furco, 2002).

Volunteerism: Non-paid services or activities that are not necessarily aligned to the students' competencies, curriculum or studies. Students may be required to perform a minimum number of hours as part of their membership requirement, for example, sororities and fraternities may include community service requirements of their members or pledges. One study looked at the motivations of volunteers, specifically, volunteering as a "forced activity". They found that, "…volunteers engage in specific behaviors that satisfy important goals. These goals can include anything from career enhancement to obtaining a sense of competency" (Henney, 2017, p. 10)

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

How do employers benefit from an internship program?

Internship programs provide employers with a number of benefits, such as giving employers the opportunity to gain more exposure in the communities they serve, and the field in which they specialize (Smith-Sitton, 2019). Internship programs strengthen the employer's relationship with the institution (Lei, 2019), and provide the opportunity to select and develop future talent (Beck, 2016). Yiu and Law report that for the hospitality field, internships provide a pool of prospective hires that are "…enthusiastic and dedicated to the industry and bring fresh ideas to the workplace" (2012, p.383). The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) states that internships positively impact retention; even after five years (2018).

More than 90% of employers polled, have a formal internship program, with the majority of employers using their internship program as a way to source full-time, entry-level hires. -NACE 2016

How do institutions benefit from an internship program?

Jack Gault and collaborators (2000 & 2010) share that higher education intuitions benefit from internships in three important ways. First and foremost, the institution, their programming, and their collaboration with employers increases visibility and social equity within the business communities they partner. Second, internships can be used as a recruitment tool, drawing students and their parents to schools with established pipelines, offering co-curricular opportunities and future job placement. Third, institutions continue to build close ties with the business communities which further develops fundraising opportunities for the school. In addition, Yiu, 2019 suggests that

Successful internship programs may be a catalyst for collaborative research opportunities, establishing new programs, and assessment of applicable curricula development. ~ Yiu 2019

How do YOU benefit from an internship program?

Do you know why an internship is important, do you know how an internship can benefit you and what you should be doing to get the most out of the experience?

Ultimately, the goal of an internship should be to increase your employability. This means developing skills that align to your field and the workforce as a whole. Cojocariu, et al, 2019, shares eight other possible benefits you may realize during an internship (p.7) You will likely have the opportunity to:

- **learn about how organizations function in general;**
- **apply theories you are learning in the classroom;**
- **develop a foundation of knowledge around a specific field;**
- **take part in unique activities specific to your desired field;**
- **receive nuanced training;**
- **witness the organizations ability, or inability to keep up with the customers' demands;**
- **experience creativity and innovation in real time;**
- **build employability capacity**

EIGHT CAREER READINESS COMPETENCIES (NACE, 2019)

Critical Thinking/Problem Solving: Exercise sound … to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems. The individual is able to … and use knowledge, facts, and data in this process, and may demonstrate ori… …ss.

Oral/Written Communications: Articul… …d effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and out… …has public speaking skills; is able to express ideas to … …nd complex technical reports clearly and effectivel…

Teamwork/Collabora… …stomers representing divers… …nts. The individual is abl… …t.

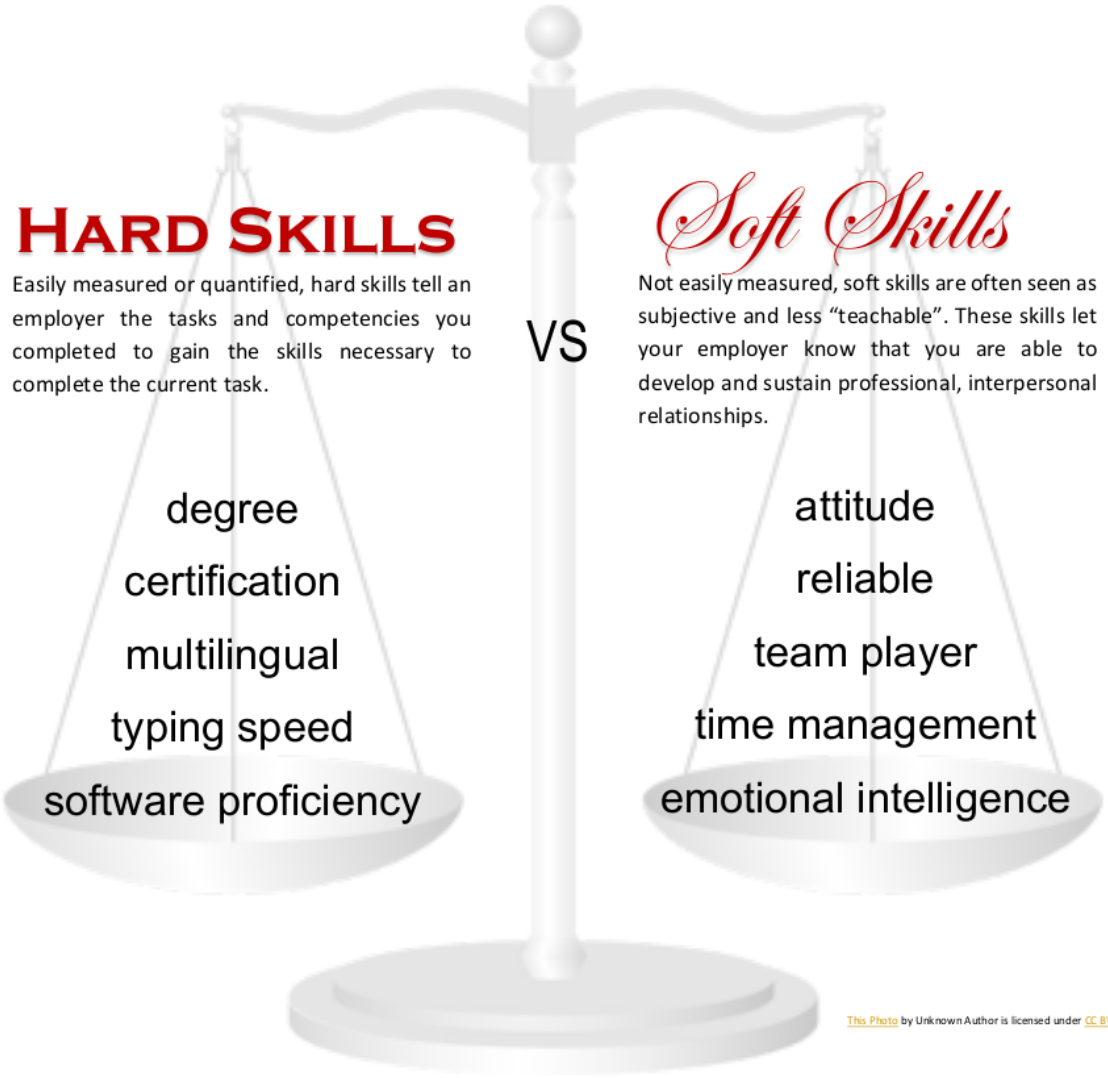
Digital T… …tability to prob… …

Le… …nal skill… …emotions and th… …ize, and delegate…

Profession… …rective work habits, e.g., punctuality, w… …gement, and understand the impact of non-ve… …e individual demonstrates integrity and ethic… …of the larger community in mind, and is able to learn …

Career Management: Id… …ns, strengths, knowledge, and experiences relevant to the position de… …d identify areas necessary for professional growth. The individual is abl… …xplore job options, understands and can take the steps necessary to pursue opp… …d understands how to self-advocate for opportunities in the workplace.

Many of the benefits you will gain from an internship will come in the form of knowledge and skills. The skills you gain will fall into one of two categories, “Hard Skills”, or “Soft Skills”. It is important to have both types of skills as you develop your professional self.



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List 2-3 hard and soft skills you expect to develop during this internship. Ask your internship site supervisor to help you if you cannot think of any specific skills.

Hard Skills: _____ Soft Skills: _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Section II

Preparing for Sucess

At this point you have successfully navigated the internship process and likely know your start date. Have you thought about some addition information that might help you start your internship off on the right foot?

The prospect of a new internship can be exciting! Chances are you have a number of thoughts and feelings right now. Take some time to complete the following questions. Walking through these steps will help you be prepared and help you make a great first impression.

Set Your Schedule

It will be important to set a schedule so that your supervisor will know when to expect you. Drafting a schedule will also help you keep on deadlines, stay organized and help you realize how much time this new endeavor will impact your schedule.

My weekly class schedule is:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

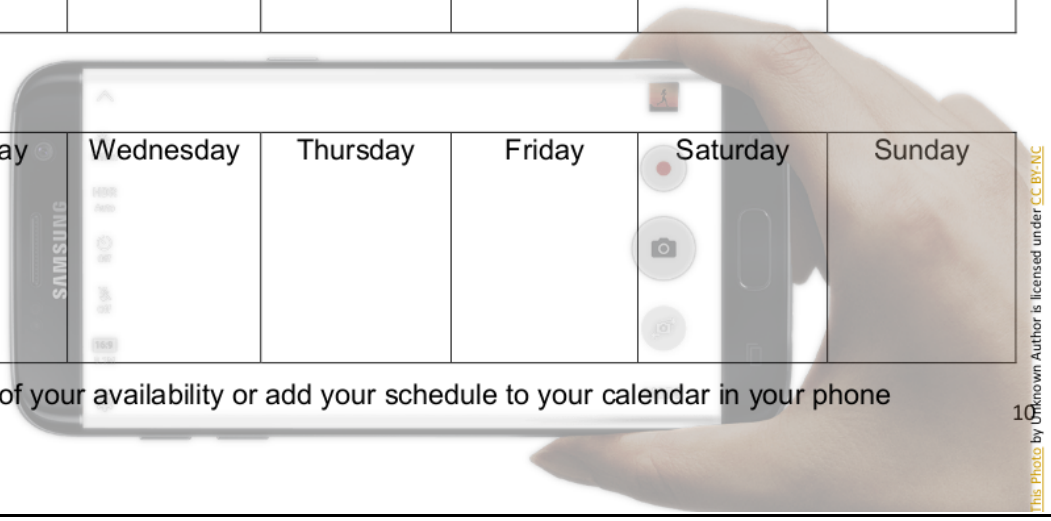
My other commitments are:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

My availability is:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Take a screenshot of your availability or add your schedule to your calendar in your phone



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Asking the following questions of your supervisor will also be a great way to show them you are interested- don't simply read these questions, have a conversation about each topic and record their answers and your thoughts about their answers. For example, if they say that they need you to work every Tuesday at 8am, however you have class during that time. Make a note. Then when they are done, talk about the times that you have other commitments.

What does your work week look like? Does the internship site prefer you to work the same number of hours each day of the work week, or are they flexible with the number of days you will be in on site?

Are there recurring meetings or events that you are expected to attend? For example, is there a weekly staff meeting, annual gala? Are the events outside of normal work hours?

Are there academic breaks at the institution that you are expecting to take off from your internship?

Discussing your schedule with your supervisor prior to arrival demonstrates your commitment to the internship experience and also will avoid any potential misunderstandings or frustrations. Once you have ironed out the details of your internship, we recommend that you confirm your work schedule via email prior to your first day.

Know Your Route

Now that you have sent your work schedule established, have you thought about how you will be getting to the internship site? Of course, you have! Have you thought about some of the unexpected things that might impact your commute?

Here are some tips based on your transportation.

Driving

Have you been to the location before?
Will you need a parking pass or toll money?
Have you budgeted for the additional gas money?
Will you need to pack anything in your car so that you can go directly to the internship site?

Walking/ riding a bike or skateboard

Do you need to build in time to change or pick up items at home before you head to the internship site?
Are you prepared for the weather?
Have walked to the location before?

Public transportation (Bus, Uber, etc.)

Do you have the correct change?
Have you taken public transportation to the location before?
Are there student discounts or reduced rates for purchasing a pass?

Doing a practice run of your commute from class, to home, to your internship site will help you get an idea of what to expect as far as traffic and timing. Practicing your commute will also increase the chance that you are early (a hallmark of professionalism) and less stressed on your first day.

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Other Things to Consider

Now that you have sent your work schedule, do you know what you are going to wear, what tools you may need on your first day, or the coming weeks? One of the best ways you can demonstrate professionalism is ask the right questions that will assure you are prepared.

Think about the following questions:

- Is there a dress code or will you be wearing a uniform?
- Do you need specific tools such as safety gear, briefcase, laptop, etc.?
- Will necessary tools be provided for you, or will you need to provide them for yourself.
- What documents will you need for your first day?
- Do you need to pack your meals, water, extra money?

Social media is a great platform for you to post about your accomplishments, portfolios and volunteering activities. You however want to be sure that your social media profiles reflect the values and professionalism you want a potential employer to see.

Use Social Media to secure internships, jobs, and volunteer opportunities.

Check out this resource for interns with a LinkedIn profile!

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Section III

Building a Partnership

Research shows (Sauder, 2019), that you as a student, will have the highest expectations around the value and outcomes of your internship. The fact is, you should have the highest expectation for this experience. You should also find ways to partner with your supervisor/mentor in setting a path for the next 12 weeks. The best way to begin to develop a partnership that will result in the outcomes that you are hoping for, is to set some goals. When writing your personal learning goals each one should follow the smart goal format so that they are **S**pecific, **M**easurable **A**ttainable **R**ealistic and **T**imely.

We recommend that you complete the following Goal Setting activity with your supervisor or mentor to help assure that you are on the same page as far as expectations and outcomes.

Share the following S.M.A.R.T. Goal Setting Process with your supervisor or mentor via email
Ask to set a specific time to set your goals
Ask to set a specific time to review your goals

1. What do you want to accomplish?
2. How are you going to accomplish this goal? Use specific steps or activities.
3. How will you measure whether you are getting closer to reaching or have achieved your goal? What ways will you be able to demonstrate the learning has taken place? What criteria will be used to evaluate your progress?

Your Goals Will Fall into one of the Following Categories:

Knowledge or skills acquisition: Knowledge or skills that you hope to acquire such as a learning to implement appropriate procedures, use equipment or follow specific processes

Personal or professional skills: Skills you apply or cultivate such as self-confidence interpersonal skills working effectively with others professional meeting email telephone etiquette networking written communication relationship with supervisor time management

Career knowledge: New information regarding the company industry or chapters and

Other: depending on your internship there may be additional categories to consider your learning objective

GOAL #1

Check the category that aligns to your goal

Knowledge or skills acquisition: Knowledge or skills that you hope to acquire such as a learning to implement appropriate procedures, use equipment or follow specific processes

Personal or professional skills: Skills you apply or cultivate such as self-confidence interpersonal skills working effectively with others professional meeting email telephone etiquette networking written communication relationship with supervisor time management

Career knowledge: New information regarding the company industry or chapters and

Other: depending on your internship there may be additional categories to consider your learning objective

1. What do you want to accomplish? _____

   _____

2. How are you going to accomplish this goal? Use specific steps or activities.

   _____

   _____

3. How will you measure whether you are getting closer to reaching or have achieved your goal? What ways will you be able to demonstrate the learning has taken place? What criteria will be used to evaluate your progress? Who will do the evaluation?

   _____

   _____

4. Now write your SMART Goal by combining all of the elements from above.

   _____

   _____

   _____

GOAL #2

Check the category that aligns to your goal

Knowledge or skills acquisition: Knowledge or skills that you hope to acquire such as a learning to implement appropriate procedures, use equipment or follow specific processes

Personal or professional skills: Skills you apply or cultivate such as self-confidence interpersonal skills working effectively with others professional meeting email telephone etiquette networking written communication relationship with supervisor time management

Career knowledge: New information regarding the company industry or chapters and

Other: depending on your internship there may be additional categories to consider your learning objective

5. What do you want to accomplish? _____

   _____

6. How are you going to accomplish this goal? Use specific steps or activities.

   _____

   _____

7. How will you measure whether you are getting closer to reaching or have achieved your goal? What ways will you be able to demonstrate the learning has taken place? What criteria will be used to evaluate your progress? Who will do the evaluation?

   _____

   _____

8. Now write your SMART Goal by combining all of the elements from above.

   _____

   _____

   _____

GOAL #3

Check the category that aligns to your goal

Knowledge or skills acquisition: Knowledge or skills that you hope to acquire such as a learning to implement appropriate procedures, use equipment or follow specific processes

Personal or professional skills: Skills you apply or cultivate such as self-confidence interpersonal skills working effectively with others professional meeting email telephone etiquette networking written communication relationship with supervisor time management

Career knowledge: New information regarding the company industry or chapters and

Other: depending on your internship there may be additional categories to consider your learning objective

9. What do you want to accomplish? _____

_____

10. How are you going to accomplish this goal? Use specific steps or activities.

_____

_____

11. How will you measure whether you are getting closer to reaching or have achieved your goal? What ways will you be able to demonstrate the learning has taken place? What criteria will be used to evaluate your progress? Who will do the evaluation?

_____

_____

12. Now write your SMART Goal by combining all of the elements from above.

_____

_____

_____

Section IV

Setteling into Your Internship

NEXT LEVEL LEARNING

Ask Questions:

Remember how we mention that you should be the one to work with your supervisor to set a path for the next 12 weeks? Well, you have set your goals, know the skills and abilities you are building, but how do you know if you are getting the most you can out of the internship process? We suggest you get a notebook to write questions about the internship site and the program from day one! Begin to ask your new collogues about the work they do, skills they have, and recommendations they would make.

Here are some questions to get you started:

- How do your colleagues communicate about their individual availability, need for help, or disagreements?
- How are meetings managed? Are they face-to-face or remote? Do they follow an agenda, or happen on the fly?
- What are the certifications required to perform certain tasks, or operate specific machinery?
- What is the culture around dress code, name badges, security, lunch hours, tec.
- What are the entry jobs in this field?
- How do individuals move to the next position in this organization? Is there a process, or is it more based on merit?
- What professional associations does the organization belong to?
- What technological skills have my colleagues mastered, and how do they keep up with trends and the ever-changing technological landscape?
- What are some of the changes that might be difficult for this organization? What changes would they excel at?

Check out these recommendations for your first month in your internship: https://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/20/6-things-to-do-to-in-the-first-month-of-your-internship.html

You have made it to the next phase of your internship. At this point you have likely already completed your onboarding, have had some experience with the office culture, and have likely already identified some elements of the internship you enjoy most, some things you think the internship site could do to improve its program, and know what you like most about the internship.

This is also a time where the excitement may have begun to wear off. You may have had some expectations around mentoring, or training that may look differently than you had expected.

Expectation vs Experience:

Review and answer the following questions. You will notice that these are the same questions from page 4. As you answer the questions, what aspects of your internship match up to your expectations, which do not?

What does your workday look like?

Who are the people you interact with?

How are you being supported?

What has been the most challenging?

What do you think you are bringing to the internship site?

What is one thing that has surprised you about this experience?

Be Open to feedback:

As you have no doubt realized, your internship is an opportunity to learn about the skills, culture, services, and overall impact of your internship site's industry. You have also noticed that in this process you have begun to learn more about yourself, how you respond to new situations and challenges, how you communicate, and what types of projects you enjoy.

One way to get the most out of your internship is to seek out feedback that is constructive and specific. You can do this in a number of ways; however, it will be important that you are ready to accept the feedback.

It can be hard to hear that we need to change the way we are doing a task or how we are feeling about a situation. We tend to have an initial emotional response. This is normal and takes place because we are often facing a task or challenge with the best of intentions. Taking time to process feedback (not venting to someone about the feedback and justifying why you do not need to change your actions) at face value, and trying to make the adjustments, will only serve to improve your level of professional skills.

Pulling it all Together:

Chances are, you are starting to feel the pressure of finals week and deadlines for projects. This will be an important time to stay engaged in your internship. Here are some activities that will help you pull everything together!

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Check out this link from CollegeRecruiter.com about wrapping up your internship.

https://www.collegerecruiter.com/blog/2018/08/06/wrapping-up-summer-internship/

Section V

Wrapping up Your Internship

ASSESSING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Referring back to the Internship job description, answer the following questions. This will help you refresh your mind about the expectations of the position, compare your experience, and provide concrete feedback to your professor and employer about your experience.

1. Did the duties and responsibilities in the job description align to the duties and responsibilities you experienced? Which ones did and which ones did not?

_____
_____
_____

2. Which of these duties and responsibilities did you see the most improvement? Which would you say you are most proficient?

_____
_____
_____

3. In which of these duties and responsibilities would you like to gain more experience or skill?

_____
_____
_____

4. What are some duties or responsibilities that the internship site could add to their job description that would have helped make the position more clear.

_____
_____
_____

Evaluation:

Keeping with the spirit of you taking the lead in your internship, be sure to ask your supervisor to provide an evaluation. Keene State College will send out a mid-term evaluation and another at the end of your internship. You will get a copy of the results. If you have been checking in about your goals, project progress, and taking suggestions of ways to improve your skills from others, the results should not surprise you. However, if there is something you do not agree with, you should reach out to your supervisor to discuss your questions. Being able to have conversations about your performance, especially when you need improvement, can be uncomfortable. Keep in mind that simply by learning to have these conversations in an open-minded and respectful manner, you are building your professional capacity.

REVISITING YOUR GOALS & SKILLS

One of the most valuable elements of your internship, will be the ability to reflect upon the learning goals to developed. Setting these goals allowed you to create a rubric that could help you see how valuable your internship has been to your overall growth.

Take a moment to consider the career path you are on, and how this internship fits into that trajectory. Regardless if you completed these goals or not, complete the following:

GOAL #1

Did you complete this goal? _____

Why or why not?

_____
_____

How will you use what you learned, even if you did no accomplish the goal?

_____

_____

GOAL #1

Did you complete this goal? _____

Why or why not?

_____
_____

How will you use what you learned, even if you did no accomplish the goal?

_____
_____

GOAL #1

Did you complete this goal? _____

Why or why not?

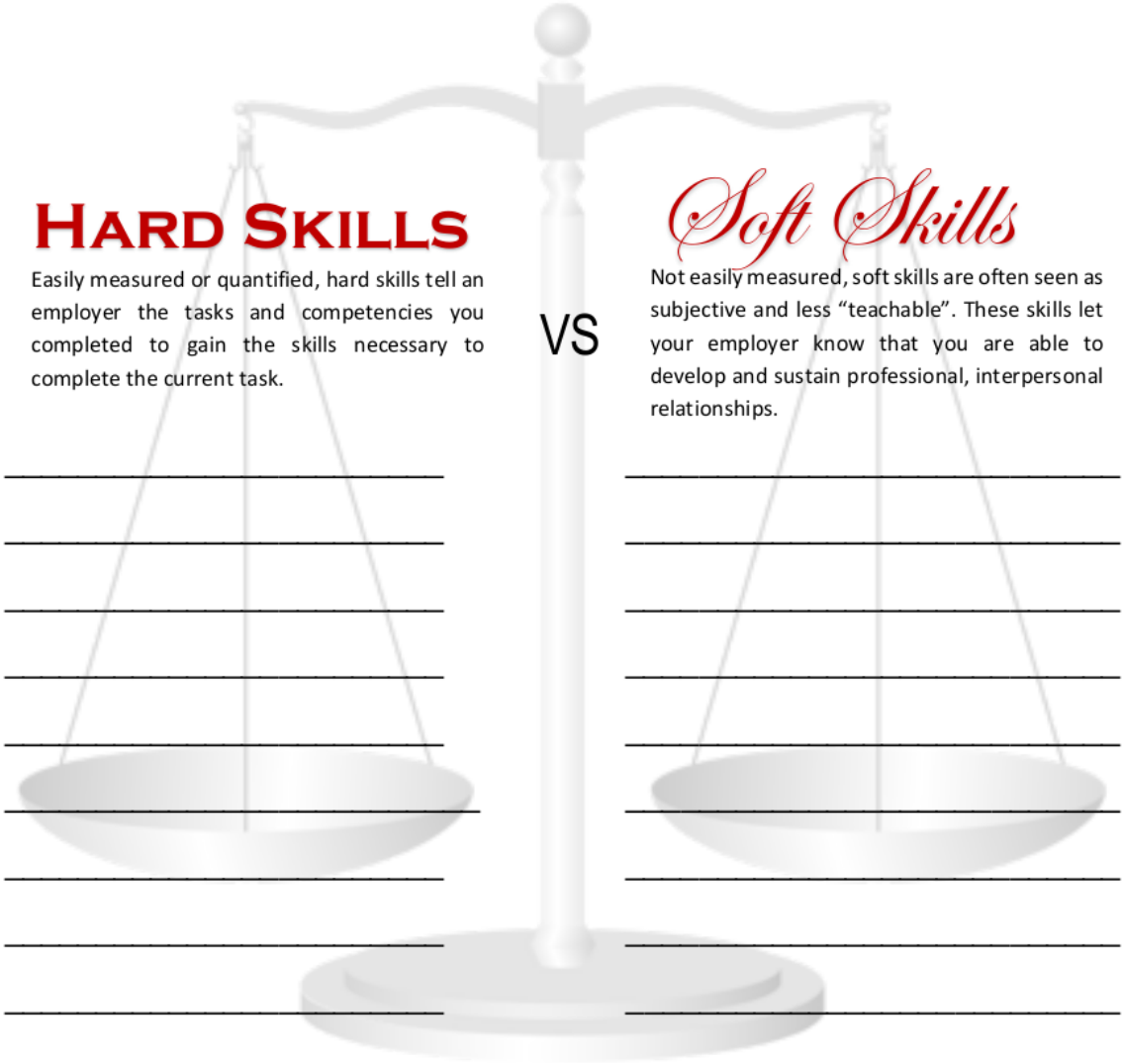
_____
_____

How will you use what you learned, even if you did no accomplish the goal?

_____

_____

There is no doubt that your skill level has improved in a number of areas. Take minute to list the hard and soft skills you think you may have improved during your time in the internship.



Hard Skills

Easily measured or quantified, hard skills tell an employer the tasks and competencies you completed to gain the skills necessary to complete the current task.

VS

Soft Skills

Not easily measured, soft skills are often seen as subjective and less "teachable". These skills let your employer know that you are able to develop and sustain professional, interpersonal relationships.

Were the 2-3 soft or hard skills you identified to develop, ones that you improved upon?

ADDING VALUE

As much as your internship is about you developing yourself into a more marketable employee, finding a fulfilling career, and gaining valuable hands-on experience, this process is more valuable than you may have realized.

The employer that supervised you, likely has an ongoing relationship with Keene State College. Mutually beneficial relationships such as collegiate internships with businesses help to assure that other students will continue to have experiential learning opportunities that will give them a better education, connect them to businesses in their field, and give them a chance to explore fields they may not have thought to explore.

You are an important part of this evolving relationship. Keene State College will send you an evaluation at the end of your internship to evaluate the internship site, your experience, and the person that supervised you. It is important that you take the time to complete the evaluation, and to be as specific as posable in your responses.

Take the time to jot down a few ideas for feedback in this space.

Discussion

Internships have long been praised with providing back-door access to skill building opportunities for college students enrolled in a number of different programs. A review of the literature surfaced a number of areas where unrealized expectations have complicated the process, however much of what we discovered seemed to support the ongoing support of internship programs. There are still major strides that will need to be addressed around ethical compensation, disparity of accessibility, and closing the gap between expectation and reality for all three stakeholders.

The literature around the experience of the student, employer and educator is still pretty siloed; many by profession or degree program. The research would benefit from the development of a standardized evaluation that could be used to assess the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of any particular program. Additional research or programmatic development around equity for first generation or nontraditional students, and learners impacted by socioeconomic hardship, or other barriers would be essential.

We have made an attempt to create a comprehensive toolkit or manual that could be reviewed by the educator, given to the employer, and even shared with the student. The items we chose to include or omit are based on the literature we reviewed and the current toolkits available, as well as an attempt to improve the current internship program at Keene State College. The toolkit will not be evaluated by others in the field, nor have we planned to develop a longitudinal study. This toolkit would be more impactful and useful if either of those two assessments were to take place. It is for that reason that we make note that the toolkit we have developed is not expected to be used by any particular program or institution, but rather to provide a framework for future discussion or research.

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