

TURN KEY



Best Practices In Action

Spring 2016



Internship Offerings Benefit Credit Unions & Interns; Help Staff Understand Millennials; Boost Membership

SECU of Maryland Internship Program Produces Win-Win For All Involved

Internships have long been a means for employer and intern alike to join together for mutual benefit. The intern learns new skills while the employer gains from the fresh perspective an intern may contribute. And the employer has the opportunity to evaluate the intern for potential entry-level employment.

But starting an internship program at a credit union requires planning and precautions to ensure that the experience is fruitful for both parties.

SECU of Maryland offers an internship program that has been fine-tuned for over a decade. It is designed to provide both the credit union and the intern with a structured, meaningful experience; one that benefits both the interns and their credit union host.

Building A Better Workforce; Connecting With Millennials Are Two Top Internship Benefits

Through an annual six-week internship offering, SECU is able to give back to the communities they serve, better understand the needs of youthful members, and groom potential employees.



The program is not without its challenges as SECU must recruit internship prospects, integrate them into the SECU culture, provide training and workplace experiences commensurate with intern-level duties, and monitor the program's effectiveness.

The well-honed offering produces several benefits for both the credit union and its young interns, some of whom have gained full-time employment at SECU after their internship experiences.

Lyle Wheeler served in one of SECU's recent internship cycles. He's now a Client Support Specialist in SECU's IT Department, and gives his intern experience positive reviews, "Looking back on my SECU internship, I would say I learned the value, benefit, and necessity of working together to accomplish our goals. Entering the IT department as an intern I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but I was quickly welcomed and given the opportunity to experience a culture of teamwork that spans across many divisions. I'm extremely proud and grateful to be a part of that."

See reverse for a Q&A with SECU Vice President for Human Resources Roderic Flowers.

Q&A

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What brought you to institute an internship program at SECU?

SECU's internship program provides a variety of benefits for all parties involved.

We at SECU get the opportunity to build our workforce with young, energetic interns who may transition to employment and bring with them a well-rounded knowledge of many of the credit union's operations.

SECU benefits by interacting with the interns and gaining a better understanding of their generation's needs and values so we can better address those needs.

Finally, and most importantly, the program is a visible way of demonstrating that SECU is connected with and genuinely cares about the communities we serve.

When did the program begin?

The internship program began over ten years ago.

There are interns who we have hired that have a longer tenure with SECU than I have and I've been here close to ten years.

Where do you recruit interns?

Local colleges and universities, the Academies of Finance in Baltimore County and Baltimore City, and the African American Credit Union Coalition have proven good sources for candidates. We also post openings on our website.

How many interns per annual cycle?

Each summer, over a 6-week period beginning in June, we'll host seven to ten interns. They range from high school juniors to college graduate students.

Are the SECU interns paid?

Yes, ours is a paid internship, with wages ranging from \$10 to \$13 per hour. Interns invest an average of 30 hours per week during their internship.

What workplace experiences do you include in your internships?

All interns serve at our corporate site and are rotated through departments based on their areas of interest and their skill sets. In their first week, all interns go through a week of on-boarding. They learn about SECU, our culture, policies, and structure. After that they are assigned to various departments, from IT to marketing, lending, retail banking, etc. In their final week we ask each intern to review what they gained from their experience. This helps us improve the program while allowing the participants to work on their presentation skills.

What advice do you have for credit unions thinking about launching their own internship program?

Provide interns activities that complement what they are learning in the classroom. That may mean assigning special projects or carving out specific responsibilities within team-wide initiatives. Include interns in day-to-day activities; make this an inclusive experience for both the intern and the organization.

Expect to learn from your interns. Teaching someone about your operations can turn out to be a major learning experience for you. Interns might ask, "Why do you do it that way?" and that creates a opportunity to reassess how you approach many tasks.

I view the SECU internship program as our way of doing something to help our youth, and that is going to come back to us through qualified, well-screened employment candidates and life-long members. These interns become community ambassadors for SECU and help solidify our reputation as a caring organization.

Any final thoughts?

I'm available and happy to discuss our internship program with others thinking about doing the same. I can be reached at roderic.flowers@secumd.com