

EMPLOYER GUIDE

Creating a Meaningful Learning Experience for Students



Good Internships are Good Business



RISLA
RHODE ISLAND STUDENT
LOAN AUTHORITY

Thank you for your interest in supervising and mentoring an intern. Your participation provides interns the opportunity for both personal and professional growth. Interns and volunteers have been commended for their diligence, work ethic, and professionalism. We are confident that you will find them a welcomed addition to your staff. Please take a moment to review this guide and learn more about expectations for working with interns. Representatives from experiential and career offices in every Rhode Island institution of higher education have come together to create this guide to outline the basic fundamentals involved in designing an internship, and illustrate the benefits of investing in experiential learning.

A collaborative effort among the following organizations



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Creating a Mutually Beneficial Relationship

The rise in global competition for a talented and innovative workforce brings opportunities for Rhode Island employers to gain a competitive edge.

What is the Best Experiential Option for Your Organization?

Experiential learning provides students with direct authentic experience through which they can use analytical skills and reflection to apply new ideas gained from the experience to their classroom learning. Experiential learning includes internships, service learning, and various practicum opportunities. Determine what the best fit for the organization is by considering the following definitions:

- » **Internships** are defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) as: “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, authentic experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.” In addition, an internship is a semester (fall, spring, summer) in duration, may or may not carry credit, may be paid or unpaid based on the Department of Labor criteria. (See Page 9 for DOL Requirements)
- » **Student Employee** is a person who is hired to provide services to an organization on a regular basis in exchange for compensation, not for academic credit. (See Page 9)
- » **Project Based Learning** is a collaborative student centered and led pedagogy that focuses on students working together in groups, applying classroom knowledge and skills to solve real-time authentic problems often in partnership with employer or community partner, and under the guidance of a faculty member.
- » **Volunteer** is a person who performs a service willingly, without pay or credit in order to support a cause, usually through a non-profit organization. The volunteer designation is only available for those opportunities and/or organizations that have a charitable or humanitarian purpose. All volunteer positions are, by nature, unpaid and participants are willingly engaging by their own volition.
- » **Service Learning** is curriculum-based emphasizing hands-on learning with the community that addresses real world concerns. The service experience provides a context for translating discipline based theories into practice.
- » **Job Shadow** provide an initial exposure to a career for a brief period of time (such as one day, a week, or a couple hours per week) by having students “shadow” an experienced employee or professional. Job shadows may include academic credit when connected to a course.
- » **Clinical Experiences** relate to the observation and treatment of actual patients rather than theoretical or laboratory studies.
- » **Apprenticeship** is highly-formal job training experience that involves studying with a master of the trade on the job.

A Closer Look at an Intern

Often times an internship is the ideal fit for an individual and employer. An internship is any carefully monitored meaningful learning experience in which an individual has intentional professional goals and reflects actively on what he or she is accomplishing throughout the experience. Developing an internship program is an excellent strategy for investing in your organization's future successes, often leading to discovering future colleagues and leaders.

A Typical Internship:

- Includes developing intentional learning objective goals that are structured into the experience and supervised by a professional with relevant and related background in the field
- Promotes academic, career and/or personal development
- Includes learning objectives, observation, reflection, and evaluation
- Balances the intern's learning goals with the organization's needs
- Typically lasts three to six months
- May be part-time or full-time
- Involves industry related and soft skill development
- May be carefully monitored and evaluated for academic credit
- Provides adequate supervision in a reasonably safe environment with the necessary tools to perform the learning goals agreed upon for the duration of the internship
- Includes a designated and insured office space

An Internship is NOT:

- Labor that is unsupervised
- Meant to replace an employee
- More than 20% busy work (filing, covering phone, errands)

Be sure to check with your corresponding institution for specific guidelines.

A Closer Look at a Volunteer

A volunteer might be the best fit for your organization if you are looking for one time assistance at an event or program or if you need a few hours per week of service (unless agreed upon, volunteering is typically limited to 3 – 12 hours per week). Unlike an internship, the focus of a volunteer position is primarily on the service being completed and the individual or issue receiving that service. An internship will primarily focus on the learning experience of the student and the benefits to the organization/employer are secondary. Service Learning is a balance between the two with equal focus on learning, service and benefits to recipients and providers.

How Do Employers & Students Benefit from Internships?

It is important to note that students should be the primary beneficiaries of internships, meaning that they are expecting a meaningful learning experience. One of the more significant advantages to providing internships is the opportunity to select and develop your future talent. You have the opportunity to evaluate and screen potential employees prior to making a full-time position offer, which leads to financial savings. Employers have reported converting more than half of eligible interns into full-time hires. If hired in a permanent position, previous interns assimilate faster to their new roles and have shorter learning curves than external hires.

Benefits



Employer

Provide freedom for professional staff to pursue creative or more advanced projects and increase staff retention rate.

Allow staff to learn about mentoring as a professional development point.

Interns can assist an organization in application of the latest strategies and techniques in the field.

Maintain connections with colleges and increase visibility on campus. Recruit other students and generate enthusiasm while creating awareness of the field for future hires.

Promote community involvement by teaching the prospective work force. This can be an excellent public relations tool.



Student

Ensure the assignment of challenging projects and tasks while receiving real life experience.

Provide projects that complement academic programs and/or career interests.

Broad exposure to the organization (remember: this is a chance for them to personally develop and explore career possibilities.)

Demonstrate industry relevance and an opportunity to create a professional network.

Finding the Right Intern for Your Organization

- » **High School:** The benefit of incorporating high school students into your organization is to develop new skills which allow them to discover what areas they excel in. Students could potentially remain with the organization through college. The PrepareRI Internship Program matches high school students with rigorous paid internships the summer after their Junior year. prepare-ri.org/internships
- » **Undergraduate Students:** An undergraduate intern could be beneficial for your organization because of their experience in and out of the classroom. They have an opportunity to apply things they've learned in their undergraduate curriculum into the workplace. Many freshmen and sophomores seek internships to explore careers in a field in which they have an interest. Juniors and seniors are looking to develop their professional career skills. They will gain more work experience, which could result in full-time employment.
- » **Post-baccalaureate:** First professional position prior to moving into a career. This can also be used as an opportunity to hone in on skills as a recent graduate.
- » **Graduate Students:** Since these students have already received an undergraduate degree, as a graduate student intern they are advancing their professional career development while also determining their career niche. These students want even more work experience to advance their skills and potentially transition into full-time employees.
- » **Career Changer/Adult Learner:** Adult learners are transitioning to a new industry and hoping to expand their professional network and incorporate their professional skills into your organization.



Considerations for International Students

These are typically undergraduate or graduate students. There is no excessive paperwork needed to hire an international intern. International students pursuing curricular practical training do not need a green card to intern nor an Employment Authorization Document/EAD. Federal regulations permit eligible F-1 or J-1 visa students maintaining valid status to intern in their major field of study with permission from the Office of International Education at the institution. The application process for international interns includes:

1. The student's academic advisor or Dean/Chairman of the department must endorse/sign the Curricular Practical Training Form (F-1) or Academic Training Certification Form (J-1)
2. The student must submit an original job offer letter, on company letterhead, that includes the following information (no faxes or e-mails will be accepted):
 - A. Name of company
 - B. Location of the internship (curricular practical training/CPT or academic training/AT)
 - C. Salary information (optional)
 - D. Number of hours per week (not to exceed 20 hours while school is in session)
 - E. Beginning and ending dates of the training
3. Student must submit all of the above documents for approval to the Office of International Education before commencing an internship period



Designing Your Internship Program

Prior to hiring an intern, an employer must understand how the company's goals and culture will align with the intern's learning goals. Since organizations vary in age, size, industry, and product, so too will internship activities.

Questions that may determine what kind of program will work best for you:

- What does your organization hope to gain from the program?
- Is your organization looking to fulfill a need on a specific project? Will this internship(s) encompass one major project, or entail a variety of small projects?
- What are the tools and workspace necessary to provide the student?
- What talents, academic background, and experience do you want in an intern? Decide on qualifications early on to help you select the best candidate.
- Who will be primarily responsible for the intern(s)? Will that person be a mentor, supervisor, or both?

» **Learn about prospective interns:** Whether the intern is a high school student, college student or adult learner, they want to develop skills. The best way to know what skills an intern is hoping to gain is to interview.

» **It is important that employers realize that school and classes must remain a top priority for interns if they are a current student.** The internship position should enhance their learning experience. Understand that for most interns this is a new experience and they may need support in balancing their schoolwork and internship. Agreeing on a set number of hours interns will work each week and offering flex-time for freedom to plan their schedules on a weekly basis are two ways to support balance.

» **Required hours/credit may vary by school but most interns typically complete 10-20 hours per week. The student intern should meet with an academic or internship advisor for further direction.**

Best Practice: Internship Mentors

In addition to the supervisor, a mentor may assist with transition into this new learning environment. This is done by answering general questions related to personal and professional growth, and sharing career knowledge leading to networking in the field.

Role of an Internship Supervisor

It's going to be important to identify a supervisor for your intern(s) who will familiarize them with the organization, provide assignments and serve as a "contact" person for questions. It's recommended that the intern supervisor be an expert in the type of work the intern(s) will be performing to provide the appropriate guidance for the intern's assignments. An intern supervisor's responsibilities will include:

- Taking part in an intern's application, screening, and interview process
- Conducting intern orientation
- Developing learning goals
- Meeting with an intern regularly to evaluate performance and if goals are being met; assessing the internship program's success
- Working closely with the corresponding college (See Page 29)



The Essential Components of an Effective Internship Description Include:

- Explain the organization's goals and mission
- Outline the intern's responsibilities and potential tasks/projects
 - Describe skills that will be developed
- Illustrate the necessary qualifications
 - Skills (computer, analytical, design, communications, etc.)
 - Education level (year, GPA, etc.)
 - Majors
- Clarify the duration of the internship
 - Hours required per week
 - Flexibility with schedule or specific hours
 - Type: summer, semester, etc.
- Note if paid or unpaid (See Page 9)
- Specify how to apply - provide contact information

Writing an Internship Posting Description

Employers are competing to gain a student's interest and stand out among the rest. When writing your posting, treat the description as an opportunity to showcase the internship. If you want to attract the best candidate, be sure your description is as honest and accurate as possible, including the full scope of the job and responsibilities. (See Pages 18 - 23)

Questions to consider before writing the position description:

Why will students want to apply for your opportunity over others in the industry? Does your opportunity illustrate how it will be a unique experience? Do you fully define the benefits and incentives your organization can provide?

Writing an internship description is essential to recruiting the right individual. Write the description in clear, everyday language that will help the student understand the position and your organization culture. If the opportunity offers a broad exposure to many elements in your organization, be sure to state that in the description. Interns need to know accurate expectations upfront.

In-Home Care Positions:

In-home care positions that are not supervised by a professional in the field are not able to serve as internships. As an alternative, University partners are happy to post on behalf of vetted third-party organizations that provide care services of this kind. For more information on agencies in your area that provide these supports please contact your state's Department of Human Services or your local medical professionals.

Policy on Internships Involving Marijuana or its Derivatives:

The colleges and universities in RI will not allow students to do internships for credit that involve any type of direct interactions with the marijuana plant or its derivatives (marijuana being a variety of the cannabis plant that is listed as a controlled substance by the U.S. D.E.A. under federal law). While several states have approved laws permitting the growing, sale and/or use of "medical" or "recreational" marijuana, it continues to be illegal at the Federal Government level and we must comply with federal laws. In addition, the use of marijuana violates the Drug-Free Schools and Campuses Act and continues to be banned on campuses. While students may in some cases pursue internships in companies and agencies working with "hemp" (another variety of the cannabis plant that is no longer listed as a controlled substance by the U.S. D.E.A. under federal law) when the activities of the company or agency is permitted under both federal and state law, the student needs to obtain approval from your academic department before entering into such an internship.



Posting Your Internship Online

Many campus career centers have databases that allow employers to post job/internship opportunities for free. You can visit their sites for instruction. Keep in mind that the timing of your post is crucial and should take into consideration the academic calendar of your corresponding institution (see Page 29 for career center websites).

What Happens After You Post?

- It is not unusual to not get applicants
- You may have to consider your timing, wording, and target audience
- You can get in touch with your corresponding campus Career Center for assistance

Making an Internship Offer

When you feel you have found the candidate with the appropriate experience, professionalism, maturity, and who is a mutually beneficial fit for the organization, make an offer. Just as in a permanent full-time job search, students may be applying and interviewing for internships with multiple organizations. Thus, it is best to make an offer as soon as a decision has been made. At this time, a work schedule should be set, compensation agreed upon, and appropriate paperwork completed for human resources and the student's internship requirements. Upon acceptance of the offer, remove your internship from all places where it is posted (e.g., college/university web sites) to prevent further applications.

The Role of the Career Center

The Career Center is well-equipped to provide assistance in the internship process on any of the following:

- Framing job postings to attract potential interns
- Providing guidance on what to expect from an intern
- Providing guidance on supervision and mentoring to support student intern growth
- Determining if the planned internship provides a meaningful learning experience
- Evaluating and assessing of the internship experience
- Integrating your feedback into future internship procedures

The Career Center is Unable to:

- Based on NACE and Affirmative Action policies, we are unable to provide direct matches for your internship position
 - While we do assist students with their internship search, the search is guided by their interests and pursued by the student



Rhode Island Work Immersion Program

The Governor's Workforce Board operates the Work Immersion Program for Rhode Island resident college students or recent college graduates (within 6 months) attending colleges and universities in or outside of Rhode Island. Non-Rhode Island residents may qualify for the program if they attend a Rhode Island College or University. The program provides up to a 50% wage reimbursement to RI businesses that provide a qualifying paid internship. Qualifying internships are those that either provide credit or are endorsed by the intern's college or university as a "meaningful learning experience."

All internships must be aligned with the students' major/career goals. The internship must pay no less than minimum wage and no more than \$20.00 per hour, and must be at least 150 hours up to a maximum of 400 hours in duration, for no longer than 20 weeks.

Once a student has completed their contract number of hours, a business is no longer eligible to receive the subsidy for her or his internship.

Paying an Intern

For-profit companies interested in providing unpaid opportunities must ensure that their internship program meets the criteria set forth by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) in order to legitimately and ethically offer an unpaid position.

- Wages for most internship opportunities are usually determined before the intern is hired
- Consider paying consistent wages to all interns within each department
- Students in technical fields are generally paid more than non-technical fields
- Pay for interns often varies by location, type of industry, size of organization, etc.
- An internship needs to adhere to a W-2, NOT a 1099

Unpaid as Defined by the Department of Labor

If you are deciding between offering paid and unpaid internships, it is important to know if the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) applies to your organization. The FLSA requires “for-profit” employers to pay employees for their work. Interns and students, however, may not be “employees” under the FLSA—in which case the FLSA does not require compensation for their work.

The Test for Unpaid Interns and Students

Courts have used the “primary beneficiary test” to determine whether an intern or student is, in fact, an employee under the FLSA. In short, this test allows courts to examine the “economic reality” of the intern-employer relationship to determine which party is the “primary beneficiary” of the relationship. Courts have identified the following seven factors as part of the test:

1. The extent to which the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation. Any promise of compensation, express or implied, suggests that the intern is an employee—and vice versa.
2. The extent to which the internship provides training that would be similar to that which would be given in an educational environment, including the clinical and other hands-on training provided by educational institutions.
3. The extent to which the internship is tied to the intern’s formal education program by integrated coursework or the receipt of academic credit.
4. The extent to which the internship accommodates the intern’s academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar.
5. The extent to which the internship’s duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning.
6. The extent to which the intern’s work complements, rather than displaces, the work of paid employees while providing significant educational benefits to the intern.
7. The extent to which the intern and the employer understand that the internship is conducted without entitlement to a paid job at the conclusion of the internship.

Source: dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf | (See *Common Legal Questions about Interns*; See Page 14 - 15)

Additional Benefits

Offering benefits may provide incentives for talented students to accept one internship position over another or increase the intern’s commitment during the experience.

- Scholarships
- Transportation and/or housing assistance for those who relocate
- Professional development networking events
- Time worked as an intern can accumulate and apply toward benefits if turned into a full-time employee after graduation
- Paid holidays (if already receiving compensation)
- Tuition reimbursement

Onboarding Your Intern

Familiarize your intern with the company, work site, and culture of your organization.

It is very important that interns be warmly welcomed and introduced throughout your organization, just as you would welcome a new full-time employee. Not only are interns new to your organization, in many cases, they are new to the professional world of work.

If affiliated with a school: Many students are unfamiliar with the activities, environment, and objectives of your organization. Even though your interns may have worked part-time to support their education, these experiences may not have exposed them to organizational politics, the need for confidentiality, the importance of teamwork, or the profit-making nature of business. It is during the orientation and training that these issues and information about the organization are addressed.

The sooner your intern understands your organization and how it operates, the sooner he or she can assume assigned responsibilities and contribute. Expectations can vary based on the size of your organization, but in general, be sure to review:

- Overall responsibilities
- Hours
- Dress code
- Safety regulations and requirements
- Lunch hour policy
- Absenteeism policy
- Cell phone/social media policies
- Confidentiality agreement
- How you prefer to be reached/communication preferences (e.g., email, phone)

Learning Goals

At the start of the internship, it is recommended that the supervisor and intern create a list of learning goals the intern hopes to complete. The learning goals serve as the academic and professional road map for the intern's semester with your organization. This activity helps to clearly identify the intern's learning objectives and how the intern plans to accomplish them. Creating these goals is also an opportune time to discuss workplace requirements, intern responsibilities, and hours expected to complete (to earn credit). We ask our supervisors to take the time to meet with the interns during the first week of the internship to discuss and negotiate learning goals. (See Pages 24 - 28)





Best Practice: Retaining Talent in the State of Rhode Island

There are many ways to make the internship both memorable and engaging for both the intern and employer. Here are some examples of **ways to enrich an internship experience**:

» **Social Activities:** Whether it is employees and interns going out to lunch, or employees taking interns to a local baseball game, engaging in these activities provides a great opportunity to get to know one another on a more personal level. They also provide interns a chance to get to know other interns and employees with whom they have not worked. Many Rhode Island employers with successful internship programs state that their social activities are rated by interns as one of the top highlights of their experience.

» **Participation in Volunteer/Community Service Days:** A great way to show interns the values of your organization is to provide a time for them to talk to other employees. Include interns in any community service or volunteer days your organization has planned. They will get to meet more employees and participate in a good cause, while seeing your company's dedication to service – an important value among the millennial generation.

» **Professional Development Activities:** Allow interns to develop their professional skills by allowing them to sit in on meetings and work with employees in other departments for a day. Provide opportunities for interns to attend career development events/seminars in the community to learn new skills.

The Stages of an Internship

Adapted from: Sweitzer, H.F., & King, M.A. (2014). The Successful internship, personal, professional, and civic development. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

A powerful framework for professional development during an internship is described in the Sweitzer and King (2014) stages of the internship model. As a best practice, supervisors can serve as mentors by engaging interns in understanding their work environment through active and consistent dialogue and collaboration.

- » **Anticipation** involves overcoming anxieties, getting to know colleagues and clients, constructing individual learning goals, understanding the organizational culture of this learning environment, and becoming familiar with the purpose and mission of the agency.
- » **Exploration** challenges a student to adjust expectations with self, with others, with organizational values, and to identify problem areas requiring attention. Students question the adequacy of their existing skills and knowledge in relation to their responsibilities in this new learning environment.
- » **Competence** is transformative as the student feels empowered, accomplishes worthwhile tasks, and seeks quality projects. Students are more connected to the social learning environment, feel more self aware, and confident professionally. Students strengthen professional skills like communicating effectively, working in a team, taking initiative, and resolving problems independently.
- » **Culmination** requires students to evaluate their performance, identify transferable skills, and engage in closure with colleagues and clients before concluding the experience.



Loan Forgiveness for Internships

Rhode Island Student Loan Authority (RISLA) has launched a rewards program to encourage students to pursue internships. This program will help reduce student loan debt and help offset the fee that some students may incur to obtain credit for internships. Loan forgiveness will be awarded to qualifying borrowers on any non-federal loan held by RISLA. In order to receive loan forgiveness, the student must complete an internship through an institution of higher education. Eligible internships are only those for which the student is earning a minimum of three credit hours. To be eligible, the student must attend a RI institution of higher education or be a RI resident, and they must have a non-federal loan with RISLA.

Internship requirements include:

- Internship must be after May 1, 2013
- Internship must be located in the United States
- Internship must be 3-credits and on transcript, validated by an institution of higher education
- Student graduates from their degree/certificate program

To apply: Download the application and view full eligibility requirements at risla.com/rewards-for-college-interns

Insurance Considerations

Employers, interns, parents, and colleges/universities should be aware of insurance considerations:

Type of Insurance	Description
Accident/Liability	Provided by the intern/parent/guardian (some organizations may require the school to provide liability insurance)
General Liability	Provided by the intern/parent/guardian or school
Professional Liability Coverage	For interns working in a clinical environment; provided by the intern or school
Automobile Accident	Provided by the intern/parent/guardian
Health/Life	Provided by the intern/parent/guardian
Worker's Compensation	Does not apply for interns participating in unpaid internship experiences, but if injured at the internship site, should be covered by the inter/parent/guardian personal insurance (paid internships require that students be covered by worker's compensation)

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), the Employer Mandate and Internships/Co-Ops (as of 9/1/2017):

- **The employer mandate:** Full-time employees (30+ hours) must be offered health insurance by the employer (if the employer has 50+ employees)
- **It doesn't apply to unpaid internships**
- **It can apply to paid internships**
- **Employer of 50+ employees would have to offer insurance if:**
 - **The student works 30+ hours per week** AND
 - **The student works more than 6 months** (otherwise they are a "seasonal" or temporary employee)
- **If the employer has to offer insurance:**
 - They only have to **offer** the insurance
 - They **will not be penalized** if the student does not take their insurance package, because most students are required to hold insurance (either through their parent(s) or through the institution) and **these plans almost always qualify as ACA compliant**

Mid-Term and Final Evaluation

An internship can only be a true learning experience if constructive feedback is provided. An effective evaluation will focus on the intern's initial learning objectives identified at the start of the internship. Supervisors should take time to evaluate both the student's positive accomplishments and areas for improvement.

Interns will look to their mentors and/or supervisors to help them transition from the classroom to the workplace. It is recommended that mentors and/or supervisors regularly meet with interns to receive and provide feedback concerning their performance. During these meetings the students may:

- Report on a project's status
- Learn how their work is contributing to the organization
- Participate in evaluating their strengths
- Discuss areas needing growth and development
- Get insight about what work lies ahead

Typically supervisors are asked to evaluate interns at the midpoint and end of the internship. Employers are encouraged to review the internship with the intern before he or she leaves. Evaluations are helpful when determining the intern's success within the organization for future internships or employment upon graduation.



Conclusion

Thank you for your interest in supervising and mentoring an intern. Your participation provides interns the opportunity for both personal and professional growth. Interns and volunteers have been commended for their diligence, work ethic, and professionalism. We are confident that you will find them a welcomed addition to your staff. Representatives from experiential and career offices in every Rhode Island institution of higher education have come together to create this guide which will outline the basic fundamentals involved in designing an internship program, and illustrate the benefits of investing in an experiential learning program.

Guidebook Based On:

Intern Today, Employee Tomorrow: The Indiana Employer's Guide to Internships (n.d.). Retrieved from indianaintern.net/employer-guide

NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers)
naceweb.org



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Common Legal Questions about Interns *

Q. What is the nature of the relationship between interns and employers?

A. Under state and federal law, an intern may be viewed either as a “trainee” or an “employee”, depending on the relationship between the intern and the employer (see criteria below).. If an intern performs work like other employees, and is supervised and directed like other employees—the intern may be viewed by the courts as an employee, regardless of whether or not the individual is paid. Interns who are deemed to be employees, are entitled to the same protections as other employees. However, interns who are deemed to be trainees are not considered to be employees, and are, therefore, not entitled to the same protections as employees. This is so regardless of whether the intern is paid or unpaid.

Q. Does the law require an organization to pay interns?

A. Interns who function primarily as employees must be paid; however, interns who function primarily as trainees (see criteria below) are not employees and, therefore, may be unpaid. However, employers must be aware of and ensure compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Rhode Island Minimum Wage Law, before classifying interns as unpaid “trainee[s].” If an intern is considered an “employee” for purposes of the FLSA or the RIMWL, then the employer must pay its interns at least the Rhode Island minimum wage.

“Employee” is defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act as “any individual employed by an employer.” Under the FLSA, to “employ” means “to suffer or permit to work.” Since this definition is somewhat circular, the Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division developed a six-factor test for determining whether workers are to be considered “trainees” or “employees” under the FLSA. The following is based on this test:

Test	Trainee (Not paid)	Intern (Paid employee)
Type of Training	The training, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to that which would be given in a vocational school.	The training approximates that which would be given to any new employee.
Who benefits	The trainee.	The employer.
Need for the Work	The trainees do not displace regular employees, but work under close observation	Work given to the intern would be done by other employees in their absence or by others hired to do it.
Impact of Work on Employer	The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the trainees and on occasion the employer’s operations may actually be impeded.	The employer’s position is advantaged due to contribution of the intern’s work.
Prospect of hire	The trainee is usually not offered a job at the completion of the training period.	The intern may be considered for full-time employment following the work assignment.
Prior understanding	The employer and the trainee understand that the trainees are not entitled to wages for the time spent in training.	The intern understands they will be compensated for their work.

*NOTE: For more information on the FLSA and interns, see the U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs Under The Fair Labor Standards Act.

Q. Can interns be classified as independent contractors or volunteers?

A. When an employer hires an intern, the employer exercises control over “the result to be accomplished and means and manner by which the result is achieved.” If the employer exercises too much control, the worker is deemed to be an employee, not an independent contractor. Because of this (although there are some other considerations), the courts are apt to consider the intern an employee, not an independent contractor. Classifying interns as “volunteers” is equally problematic. The United States Department of Labor regulations define a “volunteer” as an individual who provides services to a public agency for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons without promise or expectation of compensation for services rendered. Because of the nature of internships, most interns’ work assignments will not fit that definition.

Q. Are interns considered employees for purposes of state and federal discrimination laws such as sexual harassment, ADA, race, and religion?

A. Interns who meet the definition of an employee will be considered employees for purposes of Rhode Island and federal discrimination laws. Therefore, covered employers should assume that their interns are employees and comply with applicable discrimination statutes, such as Title VII, the Americans With Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Rhode Island State Fair Employment Practices Act. That said, interns who are not deemed to be employees, might nonetheless be protected by state and federal discrimination laws under other legal theories.

Q. Is an intern entitled to unemployment compensation?

Interns are generally not entitled to unemployment compensation after completion of an internship as the work experience is a temporary assignment which is not covered under Rhode Island unemployment compensation law.

Q. Are interns covered under workers’ compensation?

If an intern, who is paid a wage, is injured while on an employer’s premises, his or her sole recovery would be under Rhode Island’s workers’ compensation statute. Absent such coverage, an intern can seek compensation under general tort remedies.

Q. May interns be required to sign nondisclosure agreements?

Because interns are generally provided with unlimited access to an employer’s business, it is not unusual for a company to require interns to sign a nondisclosure agreement upon the commencement of the work assignment. Employers are generally advised to have interns sign such agreements to protect their organizations’ interests, including the confidentiality of documents and information mandated by law. Because most interns have limited, if any, experience in the work force prior to the internship, the impact of the nondisclosure agreement may escape them. Therefore, it is recommended that employers carefully explain the impact and legal ramifications of the nondisclosure agreement to the intern at the time it is provided.

**These statements are presented as guidelines and should not be taken as professional, legal opinions. Acknowledgments go to Benedictine University for their helpful guideline.*



Sample Internship Descriptions & Learning Contracts

Sample: Communications/Editorial Internship Description

Multi-Media News Organization

Internship Description

We are a local multi-media news organization serving communities throughout Massachusetts. From more than 160 hyper-local websites, to magazines and specialty products, to 100 plus weekly and daily newspapers, we offer advertising solutions to both large and small organizations.

Internship opportunities exist at our locations throughout eastern Massachusetts in all areas of our organization. The internships offered provide an opportunity to experience a reporter's role and be part of a news team working both in print and online. An intern is assigned to an editor and during the course of the internship works closely with that editor to gather news, conduct interviews, write articles, and take photographs and video. Interns can expect to have their work published in print and online on a regular basis. An intern's hours are mutually agreed upon by the intern and his or her supervising editor, and should be between 15 and 20 hours per week for a period of four to twelve plus weeks.

Internships are unpaid. There is a weekly minimum hour's requirement of 8 hours for college students, but flexible schedules are available. Internships must be a requirement of the school for academic credits. Before you begin your internship, documentation from the school will be required stating how many credits you will receive, how many hours are you required to work per week, start and end dates of internship, and if your supervisor is required to fill out an evaluation.

You will need to provide a resume and cover letter which outlines your goals for an internship.

Qualifications : Journalism, English, Communication or Media Major in a Bachelor's Degree Program, Transportation

Hours Per Week: 8+, Flexible

Wage/ Salary: Unpaid, An Equal Opportunity Employer

Sample: Design Internship Description

Summer Design Internship

Internship Description

Students and recent graduates of Rhode Island colleges will join our team and participate in a variety of research, design, and fabrication projects. In addition to this, interns will propose their own project, to be completed over the course of the internship, with our resources, guidance, and collaboration. Interns will exercise their skills and gain hands-on experience, as well as expand their knowledge through interdisciplinary collaboration.

WHAT YOU MIGHT WORK ON:

- Product and furniture design and fabrication
- Architectural design
- Installation design and fabrication*
- Physical computing
- Web, UI/UX design and development
- Software development
- Business development and strategy
- Digital fabrication research
- Social programming such as workshops and events

*We have received a substantial grant to build 2 'Urban Chapels' in Newport this year. Interns interested in this project will have a chance to contribute heavily to these outdoor public art projects' design, fabrication, and installation.

Qualification/Requirements

- Currently enrolled at, or a recent graduate of a Rhode Island institution of higher learning
- Living in or near Providence, Rhode Island for the summer
- Interested in design across discipline
- Self-motivated, independent, collaborative, reliable, and responsible
- Interested in learning and helping others learn

How to Apply

Send the following items to info@employer.com

1. Statement of intent
2. Resume
3. Work samples

Applicants who do not provide all three items will not be considered.

- Please do not upload resume through school job site; email it to us.
- Please be sure to include a cover letter/statement of intent that is specific to studio.
- The deadline to apply is April 6th. Final decisions will be made by May 15th.

Sample: Engineering Internship Description

Technical Career Education

Internship Description

The Test Engineering Intern will be responsible for developing and executing physical and electrical performance testing to have more comprehensive characterization of fluid dispensing equipment. Essential job duties and responsibilities include: developing test plans to effectively evaluate dispense equipment (valve, dispenser, barrel) performances, selecting the test methodology and instrumentation required, setup the test equipment, execute tests, summarize their test results, and conclude in a formal report format. Any other duties will be assigned.

Qualifications

- Pursuit of a mechanical, industrial or electrical engineering bachelor's degree at least a junior in standing
- Self-directed and motivated
- Technical report writing skills
- Proficient in Microsoft Office

Preferred Skills and Abilities

- Familiar with Labview
- Familiar with National Instruments products
- Knowledge of physical and electrical measuring methods

Working conditions and physical demands

- Mixed environment of office, laboratory and manufacturing. To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. Must be able to lift up to 20lbs daily and 40lbs on occasion.
- 10-15 hours per week availability, \$17/hour
- Transportation to and from internship experience

The requirements listed above are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Drug-free workplace in an effort to safeguard workplace health, safety, and productivity. Employment is contingent upon passing a post-offer drug screening and background check. Fully committed to Equal Employment Opportunity and to attracting, retaining, developing, and promoting the most qualified employees without regard to their race, gender, identity or expression, color, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, citizenship status, veteran status, or any other characteristic prohibited by state or local law.

Sample: Marketing Internship Description

Insurance Company

Internship Description

Our company has more than a century of experience as a personal lines insurance carrier. Consistently ranked highest in customer satisfaction by its policyholders, our company is strong, stable, and financially secure. Our office located in Lincoln, RI, is seeking an intern for our Marketing Department. This is a paid internship, and the working hours are 37.50 hours per week during the summer months. The selected candidate will be responsible for assisting and supporting the Marketing Department with a variety of social media and marketing initiatives.

Job Functions and Responsibilities:

Social media focus includes

- Assist with social media engagement by helping manage social channels
- Drafting and editing copy for social channels
- Monitoring social media web analytics on a weekly basis (e.g., page views, Twitter followers), and provide reports of growth and other activity

Marketing/advertising focus includes

- Engaging with marketing teams on a regular basis to brainstorm ideas for new and innovative marketing and social media campaigns
- Assist with gathering data for marketing reports and supporting a variety of marketing and advertising programs

General responsibilities include, but are not limited to

- Researching industry-specific sites (blogs, forums, etc) for product reviews, customer comments, and other relevant marketing information
- Maintaining marketing program files

Job Requirements

- Must have excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Knowledge and experience with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social media platforms
- Strong attention to detail and organizational skills
- Property and casualty insurance knowledge a plus
- Our internship is designed for individuals who are currently enrolled at an accredited college/university and who will be continuing their undergraduate studies in the fall
- Candidates should be seeking a Bachelor's degree in Marketing, Public Relations, Communications or Journalism
- All applicants must submit a cover letter
- Transportation to and from the internship environment

Qualifications: Please see job requirements.

Hours Per Week: 37.5

Wage/ Salary: Hourly

Sample: Public Relations Internship Description

Corporate Public Relations Company

Internship Description

Are you the next PR Superstar? If so, you're going to need the skills and relevant work experience to get your foot in the door of your first public relations job.

We take great pride in nurturing the up-and-coming public relations stars of tomorrow. Through our hands-on, year-round corporate public relations internship program, students compete for a unique opportunity to work alongside an award-winning public relations team that develops innovative global programs to help support the organization's growth, client retention, and profitability.

WORK WITH A GLOBAL LEADER Established in Rhode Island 175 years ago, we are a \$4.6 billion organization that insures more than one out of every three FORTUNE 1000 organization's and similar-sized organizations in nearly 200 countries. The organization, ranked 766 among FORTUNE Magazine's largest organizations in America, employs more than 5,100 people in 62 offices worldwide.

EXPERIENCE YOU WILL GAIN. Unlike internships at other organizations, our public relations interns gain meaningful, real-world experience in the four key areas in which the most astute public relations practitioners demonstrate competency: research, planning, implementation, and evaluation. You can expect to develop confidence and marketable skills by engaging in or assisting with many of the following activities:

- Preparing news releases, bylined articles, award nominations, fact sheets, executive biographies
- Enhancing the organization's social media presence, corporate Web site, corporate Intranet
- Participating in strategy meetings, conference calls, media interviews
- Monitoring earned media coverage using the latest research tools
- Publishing the organization's quarterly media coverage report
- Supporting special events and site tours; and much more

Qualifications: Only the best and brightest need apply.

To be considered for the public relations Summer/Fall or Winter/Spring internship, you must:

- Maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Major in Public Relations, Communications, English, Journalism or Marketing
- Plan to pursue a career in Public Relations
- Be a junior or senior in college
- Applicants are responsible for transportation to and from the internship experience

Hours are flexible and depend on the student's class schedule, course requirements (if applicable) and availability.

Hours Per Week: 40

Wage/ Salary: Paid

Sample: User Assistance Description

Internship Description

This is a paid internship, tailored around your school schedule.

As a User Assistance Intern, you will have an opportunity to learn about our simulation applications for a user's perspective. You will gain hands-on experience in User Assistance by applying your technical and communication skills to build content for our next generation of user assistance. Working with Software Developers and Senior User Assistance Developers, you will author and edit technical content, create examples and videos, and implement improvements based on user requests.

You will work in a highly technical, collaborative, fast-paced environment, and your work will help the R&D team deliver an engaging user experience to delight the users of our engineering simulation software.

What will your role be?

- Helping develop and document example problems based on real-world Industry Process Experience workflows
- Working with XMetaL XML authoring software to create or edit online help topics
- Supporting the User Assistance Group by working on various short-term projects
- Designing and implementing information architecture
- Using Camtasia software to create and edit videos
- Navigating through company applications to connect and test the integration of user assistance within the user interface

Your key success factors:

- Actively enrolled in a Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, or PhD program in Engineering or the sciences for the duration of the internship
- Minimum cumulative GPA 3.0
- Able to work on-site in the Johnston, RI office throughout the internship
- Demonstrates familiarity with engineering concepts
- Possess strong communication, both oral and written in English
- Demonstrates an interest in User Assistance, technical communication, content design, and content strategy
- Demonstrates well developed organizational skills and possesses strong attention to details
- Able to effectively collaborate closely with software developers and technical writers
- Capacity to take direction and guidance from other in a positive manner

Apply Online

Sample: Learning Contract Worksheet

The purpose of your Learning Contract is to give you the important opportunity to reflect on what you want to learn and gain in your internship and develop a plan for achieving those goals. You will share your completed Learning Contract with your supervisor to ensure open communication about what you hope to gain from the internship and what learning opportunities they can provide.

Intern Name: _____ Internship Site: _____ Internship Credits: _____

Learning Goal <i>What do you want to learn or accomplish?</i>	Learning Resources & Strategies <i>What tasks will you do to achieve your goal?</i>	Personal Evidence of Accomplishment <i>How will you know you achieved your goal?</i>	Tangible Evidence of Accomplishment <i>How will you prove you achieved your goal?</i>	Target Completion Date <i>By what date can you accomplish this goal?</i>
<p>Think about what you want to gain from your internship. Do you want to develop or hone a skill? Improve an area of your professional development? Increase your knowledge in a particular area? The number of credits you're earning in your internship determines the number of goals you set:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •3-6 = 3 learning goals •7-9 = 4 learning goals •10+ = 5 learning goals 	<p>This section will describe the tools and tasks you'll use to accomplish your goal. Consider all your resources (printed & online materials, people, trainings, etc), strategies (observation, discussions, involvement, etc), and tasks (research, testing yourself)</p>	<p>This section will explain how you will know when you accomplished your goal. This can be internal to you.</p>	<p>This section will detail how you can prove to others that you accomplished your goal. This must be something that can be seen, touched, or experienced by others.</p>	<p>List a date that you think you can realistically accomplish this goal (must be within the internship semester). It is your responsibility to honor this deadline you set for yourself.</p>

Sample: Education Learning Contract

Learning Goal	Learning Resources & Strategies	Personal Evidence of Accomplishment	Tangible Evidence of Accomplishment	Target Completion Date
Develop a general understanding of the RIELDS (Rhode Island's Early Learning and Development Standards) used in early childhood room settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the RIELDS standards to become more familiar with the standards and expectations for children. • Review the nine domains of early learning development so that I am able to identify them in any classroom setting. • Review my goal and the RIELDS outline with my supervisor and gain feedback on how she best incorporates RIELDS in her weekly lesson plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will be able to name all nine domains of the RIELD standards and utilize them when creating a weekly lesson plan for the children at the school. • I will review what I've learned from the RIELDS outline with my supervisor to assure that I have incorporated them into the lesson plans correctly. 	I will have developed a lesson plan for the children at the learning center incorporating the RIELDS standards and their nine domains.	March 2
Develop a lesson plan for the children at the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use my time there to observe and connect with the children. • Ask my supervisor to go over previous weekly lesson plans so that I can get a better idea of what my placement site expects and what is academically appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My supervisor will approve of the lesson plan that I come up with. • The children will really enjoy the activities planned for the day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My lesson plan will not only go through my supervisor's approval but the head coordinator's approval as well. • I will be working hands on with the children at the learning center and I will have the chance to complete the activities that I came up with. 	March 9
Create a case study that focuses on one child specifically at the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply all my knowledge on how to conduct a case study. • Get my supervisors approval to conduct the case study, and go over any regulations and expectations they have for me during this time. • Utilize my resources, and ask my supervisor and the head coordinator for advice on how I can make the most out of my observations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will plan and schedule exact dates with my supervisor so that I am able to strictly observe and work on my case study. • I will take notes and review my findings with the head coordinator and schedule more time if needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the last week of classes, I would like to have finished my case study and have presented my findings with the head coordinator. • I would like to document and determine my findings, to see if that specific child has met the RIELDS outline standards. • Document specific things in the child's environment that supports the child's growth and development. 	Last week of classes
I want to work one-on-one with children who are not always involved with others in class, and I want to also work on helping children that showcase developmental delays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will ask my supervisor and the head coordinator at the school if I can work one-on-one with children that showcase developmental delays. • I will work hard to encourage expressive language, and encourage them to build relationship with others. • I will also work with children who show expressive language and social and emotional development to get them to learn, work, and open up to children that are not as open to things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will be able to see a great difference with student interaction in the class room. (I will hopefully observe children who do not always play together play together more often) • I will see a difference in the way some children express themselves to others. • Hopefully I will see more problem solving within the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will go through my goals with my supervisor so that we are on the same page on what I would like to see change in the class room, so she will be informed and will notice the progress that is being made. • I will notice a more positive atmosphere, and children will use problem solving to make better choices. 	By the end of the semester

Sample: Events Learning Contract

Learning Goal	Learning Resources & Strategies	Personal Evidence of Accomplishment	Tangible Evidence of Accomplishment	Target Completion Date
I want to be able to produce a successful large scale event for a festival setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with supervisors to obtain speakers. • Oversee the awards for the festival event. • Work on the registration. • Oversee planning details, such as the venue and food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will be able to communicate with leaders in the film industry. • I will be working with the Rhode Island Film and Television office. • I will have a completed and organized registration for the event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A breakdown of the schedule for the event. • A menu and sponsor list for the event. • A Facebook post for the event. 	April 7
I want to be able to effectively interview multiple individuals for an online blog for the festival.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create the questions for the interviews. • Communicate with the filmmakers to set up the interview. • Read articles on writing effective emails. • Review my supervisor's sample emails. • Gain supervisor feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will be able to create well worded and concise questions that not only address them as a person and filmmaker, but their film as well. • I will be able to communicate, especially via email, without referring to my notes or to my supervisor for help doing so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of my interviews in pdf form. • Recordings of my interviews should the situation provide me the opportunity to do so. • Copies of my most well-written emails. 	July 30
Effectively and efficiently help to organize a televised program by communicating with filmmakers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with filmmakers to gain permission needed for the feature program. • Communicate with my supervisor regarding the films and filmmakers. • Speak with my supervisor on how to best keep a record of who has responded and their response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will have gained the permission needed by the filmmakers to show their film in the program. • I will be able to communicate, especially via email, without referring to my notes. • I will be able to accurately keep record of the filmmakers and their films. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of my correspondence with the filmmakers of the films we will be featuring • Shoot a short interstitial, or interview, for the program. 	August 1

Sample: STEM Learning Contract

Learning Goal	Learning Resources & Strategies	Personal Evidence of Accomplishment	Tangible Evidence of Accomplishment	Target Completion Date
Learn how to properly write technical memorandums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research how to write a technical memo and take notes • Review previous technical memos written by my supervisor and colleagues • Practice writing one and receive feedback from project manager • Make improvements based on feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be able to fluidly write a memo without the need to look at my notes or examples • Project manager will no longer need to make corrections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The memos I write will be evidence of my ability to write a technical memo • Different memos will show how my skills increased over time due to practice 	March 3
Learn how to collect data from video surveillance to properly represent what is actually happening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with project manager to discuss • Review procedures to follow when collecting data • Go over what data needs to be collected • Take a small amount of the video surveillance and collect data for it • Receive feedback on my collection of data, make adjustments where necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be able to take large amounts of video data at a time and collect the data with speed and accuracy (presented in Excel document) • The project manager will no longer need to oversee my collection of the data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will have Excel sheets of data that I have collected for different sets of video • Team will have access to the completed excel spreadsheets to utilize towards the project 	February 24
Learn to correctly calculate and report statistics from collected data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review what statistical data needs to be calculated from the video data • Have project manager explain/demonstrate how to calculate the needed data • Take a spreadsheet of data, practice using Excel to calculate the data • Have project manager look over the data I calculated and make comments • Make necessary changes • Identify reporting needs and format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take all of the Excel spreadsheets of collected video data, and calculate the statistical data • Project manager no longer needs to oversee my calculations • Can use statistical data to brief the team on findings and write technical memos • My project manager can use the data to report to the client or write memos of his own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excel sheets of data including the statistical calculations • Possible memos that utilize the statistical data 	March 24

Sample: Environmental Science Learning Contract

Learning Goal	Learning Resources & Strategies	Personal Evidence of Accomplishment	Tangible Evidence of Accomplishment	Target Completion Date
How to tell if a marine animal is in distress.	I will closely observe the behavior of the marine animals when they are put into stressful situations. I will ask a lot of questions.	When I am successful in knowing most of the common behaviors of the marine animals.	I will point out to others in the clinic that the animal is stressed and that we should give it some time to calm down.	April 15
How to properly restrain marine animals we are studying.	I will shadow and observe long-time volunteers and my supervisors. I will ask a lot of questions I will refer to reference materials (training manuals, web-based resources where people have shared their experiences, etc.)	When I am successful in restraining each of the species in a safe manner and while following proper protocol.	When my training sheets are signed by my supervisor. When I can explain process and model for others.	May 5
How to properly set up/clean up on physicals day.	I will practice the routine of set up/ clean up. I will ask questions if I have them. I will review any available training materials.	When I successfully set up for physicals on my own.	When my training sheets are signed by my supervisor. When I can create a training guide to illustrate how to properly set up/clean up on physicals day.	March 15
How to properly perform a rescue of a marine animal.	I will ask my supervisor many questions. I will observe rescues. I will practice methods and procedures.	When I successfully rescue a marine animal and bring it back to the clinic. When I feel confident about my abilities/the process. When I receive positive feedback from supervisor.	When my training sheets are signed by my supervisor. When I can explain process and model for others.	May 5
How to successfully admit a new rescue patient.	I will read the protocols for how to admit a new patient I will ask questions. I will assist in admission.	When I successfully admit a new patient into the clinic.	When my training sheets are signed by my supervisor. Create reference sheet to train others.	April 31

Get in Touch with RI's College Career Centers

Visit the websites to post jobs and internships

Brown University

brown.edu/campus-life/support/careerlab

Bryant University

career.bryant.edu

Community College of Rhode Island

ccri.edu/careerservices

Johnson & Wales University

careers.jwu.edu

New England Institute of Technology

neit.edu/Career-Services/Overview

Providence College

providence.edu/CAREER-EDUCATION-CENTER

Rhode Island College

ric.edu/careerdevelopment

Rhode Island School of Design

careercenter.risd.edu

Roger Williams University

ccpd.rwu.edu

Salve Regina University

salve.edu/office-service/career-development

University of Rhode Island

web.uri.edu/career



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