



# BEST PRACTICES

## FOR HOSTING REMOTE AND VIRTUAL INTERNSHIPS

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses have pivoted quickly and altered how they do their work, including how they manage their interns. To help Westminster's industry partners think through this process, we gathered the following best practices for structuring virtual internships, should they be necessary.

Using these strategies will help set the stage for an effective virtual internship experience that benefits both your organization and student interns.

# 1

## ASSESS YOUR HOSTING CAPABILITIES

- In order to host virtual internships, you will need to provide equipment, such as virtual meeting platforms and software, files, and other necessary resources.
- Identify who will be supervising, training, mentoring, and providing interns with timely feedback.

# 2

## PLAN ON VIRTUAL ONBOARDING

- Host a virtual orientation that introduces interns to your organization's mission, goals, and values. E-introduce interns to the team. Having an understanding of the overall organization will help interns see where they fit and how their work is contributing to the bigger picture.
- Set an agreed-upon schedule with interns. During the fall and spring semesters, students should work less than 20 hours a week at a Westminster-affiliated internship. Supervisors and interns should agree on a definitive time allotment per week, per day, and per internship activity.

# 3

## SET LEARNING GOALS AND WORK PLANS

- Westminster interns create three learning goals when registering their internships. Virtual internships continue to include learning goals and increased knowledge, the development of new skills, and values clarification.
- Industry partners can identify projects, tasks, and learning outcomes to help interns reach their goals.

# ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

## FACTOR IN THE REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

Students engaged in virtual internships should not incur any personal expenses. Any costs, including the purchase of software and hardware for the purposes of the internship, should be covered by the internship host site, or alternative arrangements should be provided to students prior to starting their internships.

## ADJUST YOUR EXPECTATIONS ACCORDINGLY

This may be the first time your interns have worked in an independent work environment which necessitates high levels of self-motivation and personal organizational skills. The more support and tools you equip them with in this new environment, the faster they will adapt.

## CONTACT WESTMINSTER'S OFFICE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT TO GET STARTED

Employer Connections Coordinator Mandy Plybon in the Office of Career Development — part of Westminster College's new Student Success Center — will be happy to discuss your organizations' needs and constraints. Please feel free to reach out to Mandy, who can help you convert your face-to-face internships into virtual opportunities!

## MANDY PLYBON

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*This flyer is adapted from information provided by the Academic Affairs Internships Office of California State University, Long Beach.*

# 4

## RETHINK YOUR TRAINING METHODS

- Training should be conducted at the beginning of an internship and may need to be handled differently in the virtual information. Methodology can continue to include expectations, communication practices, and an introduction to projects and assignments.
- Provide training on how to utilize any software and how interns may access information needed to complete their work.
- When a new task or assignment is introduced, conduct a training session to make sure interns understand the project and their role.

# 5

## PLAN ON VIRTUAL AND OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

- Communication will take place more often at the beginning of the internship. You will probably want to touch base via video conference with your interns at least two to three times per week during the first few weeks.
- Once the interns and you are comfortable with the arrangement, video check-ins can take place on a weekly basis to follow up on current assignments.
- Timely feedback is important. Review deliverables and provide feedback to students on a regular basis.

# 6

## BE CREATIVE IN YOUR SUPERVISION AND MENTORING TECHNIQUES

- Utilize the interns' learning goals to assess their progress.
- Provide opportunities for the student to ask questions. Create a virtual mentoring program for students to network and learn from other members of your team.