



## The Importance of Internships: Ensuring Informatics Students' Future Success

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### Abstract

With so many people looking towards furthering their education and with all of the demands the recent federal mandates for healthcare information technology (HIT) have put on the field of informatics, the need for educated and knowledgeable staff for HIT projects is critical. With the emergence and recent popularity of graduate education in healthcare informatics, we see an influx of potential students entering these programs who may not have the clinical or information technology backgrounds. Some have even reported challenges after obtaining their master's degree and getting hired 'without experience'. These individuals have a great desire to work in informatics and recognize the enormous impact the field they can have on healthcare but they lack the hands on experience that some employers are looking for.

### Keywords

Internships; Informatics; Healthcare

### Introduction

So, the question is- how do we prepare these individuals and give them the tools and experiences they need to succeed? The answer likely lies in internships.

Over the past several years, the graduate program for which I am the director, has engaged a growing number of partners from health systems/hospitals to serve as internship sites for our students. While the on boarding process for these sites and students can sometimes feel arduous, the end results are well worth the time and effort towards providing an excellent experience for graduating students.

According to Inc., there are "4 Benefits of a Student Internship Program" in which the author quotes Joshua Simon, CEO of SimonCRE. Simon, a long-time supporter of interns and internships recognizes the value of internships. He feels, through these initiatives "you may be setting up a student to go on and start their own business that may change the world. Either way, you're opening up possibilities for those of the next generation to find a path to success"[1].

Smith [2] presented the findings of a survey conducted by Internships.com of "7,300 students and recent graduates, as well as over 300 human resources and recruitment professionals" [2]. The

results demonstrated a strong association between completing an internship and getting hired. Internships, according to Stuart Lander, chief marketing officer at Internships.com have become the "new interview" in the job search process providing "A 7 in 10 chance of being hired by the company you interned with" [2]. A good internship opportunity provides the student with 'face time' and gives them an opportunity of becoming well known to the potential employer.

Bazzaz [3] reports "Interns getting job offers at record levels this year. Some 72% of them--a post- recession high--received offer letters at the end of their internships".

The benefits of hosting an intern aren't all for the students. The host site can also gain from the experience. Some of the ways in which an internship can be beneficial for the host organization:

### Interns can provide additional labor capacity

Once trained on job/task responsibilities, the intern can complete work and add to the organization's productivity.

### Internship provides an opportunity to 'audition' a potential future employee

Having an intern for an extended period of time allows an organization the option of an 'extended interview' to determine if an intern is a good fit for the organization. Interns can be a low-cost, low-risk opportunity for employers to evaluate prospective employees,

### Interns can provide help with "back-burner" projects that might not otherwise be completed

An organization often finds a list of projects that may be of lower priority and waiting to be assigned. Interns, often at far less labor cost can complete this type of work while also allowing full-time employees to focus on tasks that are of higher priority.

### Hiring an intern for a full-time position can lead to savings in the areas of recruitment and selection

It can be costly to advertise and interview for open positions. Interns offer an internal pool of candidates thereby bypassing this time and financially costly process.

### Interns as new hires can be more productive sooner

Interns who have been at an organization for a period of time are familiar with the work to be accomplished and are knowledgeable enough to contribute relatively quickly after being hired. They often do not need the same degree of socialization, training, and adjustment period that most new college hires require.

### Interns who get hired are often more loyal towards the organization

With a certain sense of feeling part of the organization and potentially of gratitude for the opportunity of being hired, the intern stays as an organization for extended organizational socialization experience [4].

As internships play such a vital role in preparing the next generation of HIT leaders, organizations who participate in student

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internships live the adage 'Pay it Forward'. What better way to give back and to steer the future of our industry.

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