



Board of Regents
University System of Ohio



Harnessing Ohio's Talent

Internships, Co-ops & Career Readiness

A BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT GUIDE FOR OHIO'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

July 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The information presented in this manual is guidance and directional in nature. It is intended to help campuses think through the process of building high-quality, student-centered, business-friendly internship or cooperative education (co-op) programs. The guide is designed to help campuses identify what needs to be done and what their options are for doing it.

In addition to a primer on internships and co-ops that is its heart, this guide features an extensive discussion of how colleges and universities can develop and nurture sustainable relationships with their business partners.

There was a time when a high school diploma was an adequate credential for getting a well-paying job. In more recent times, some form of postsecondary credentialing has come to be regarded as a necessity for securing employment in a global economy where knowledge and innovation are highly prized and rewarded – and where employer expectations are higher than ever before and rising.

For this reason, increasing the number of Ohioans with a college degree or other postsecondary credential or certificate of value in the marketplace is a matter of economic survival. It's a critical strategy for ensuring abundant economic opportunities for our citizens, enhanced economic competitiveness for our businesses and robust economic growth and prosperity for our state.

The role Ohio's colleges and universities play in developing a statewide talent pool that attracts business investment and stimulates job creation and economic growth is indisputable. That role is powerful, but evolving. Today, the bar for educational attainment is being raised and the transition from education to workforce is being redefined.

Additionally, businesses today routinely expect college graduates to have real-world work experiences and to be able to use the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom in a work-based setting. Recognizing the value of work-based learning in building Ohio's capacity for innovation and discovery, the state's education policy leaders have directed substantial funds to support increased internships and co-ops on college and university campuses across Ohio.

PART ONE: A Primer on Internships & Co-ops

Redefining the Transition from Education to Workforce

- The heightened demand for work-integrated education experiences is being driven by global competition for investment and jobs. Therein lies the greatest value of internships and co-ops: **their potential for attracting, growing and retaining the businesses and workers that will shape Ohio’s economic and social vitality through investment, economic growth and job creation.**
- To boost those efforts, this guide was developed by examining what has been learned from the experiences of colleges and universities that have already established internships or co-ops, including: (1) the best ways to design these programs, (2) how to engage students and build campus-level support for experiential learning, (3) what institutions do to develop and nurture relationships with their business partners, (4) what institutions can do to ensure that their students – once on the job – have positive experiences, and (5) how to evaluate these programs to ensure that all students have career-ready learning experiences.

Building Successful Internship and Co-op Programs

- Great programs don’t just happen. They happen because new partnerships are formed that reach beyond traditional boundaries and have the persistence to prevail.
- Every institution must determine how its organizational structure will support work-based learning and the businesses that need talent with those experiences.
- This guide examines several proven steps that can be taken to generate momentum and build long-term support for a successful experiential learning program.
 - » **Build and articulate a campus vision** – a clear picture of what things are going to look like after the changes are made to incorporate work-based learning into the curriculum, and how faculty, staff and other stakeholders will benefit from the anticipated changes.
 - » **Assess the internship/co-op landscape** – determine what work-based learning opportunities already exist on campus, what support can be provided to grow and strengthen current programs, what internship/co-op programs are being offered by other institutions, how many interns are being placed in jobs, what companies are hiring interns and review best practices from NACE among other national benchmark materials.

- » **Create a sense of ownership** by (1) getting committed buy-in at the top of the institution; (2) forming a team of supporters with the right composition and sufficient credibility to be trusted, heard and followed, with the capacity to drive the reengineering of an institution's academic program; (3) building a widespread sense of urgency; and (4) identifying incentives that can change people's assessment of a work-based learning initiative.
- » **Prepare a strategic action plan** that establishes goals, sets strategies and tactics to reach them, identifies important infrastructure needs, addresses core curriculum issues, defines anticipated learning outcomes, spells out a business engagement strategy and assigns responsibilities and timelines for all elements of the plan.
- » **Recruit, advise and prepare students for experiential learning** by helping them develop, evaluate and/or carry out education, career and employment decisions, and by supporting them before and during their work-based learning experiences.
- » **Create change for a new work-based learning culture** that values experience and ensures the next generation of campus leaders value and embrace the priority given to work-based learning.
- » **Persist**

PART TWO: Engaging Business, Strengthening Accountability

Sustaining Relationships with Business Partners

- The cornerstone of a successful internship and co-op program is the development of sustainable relationships with business partners. Successful work-based learning experiences are collaborative, mutually beneficial partnerships between institutions of higher education and business enterprises.
- Marketing an institution's internship or co-op program is one dimension of an institution's outreach to prospective employer partners – but any outreach effort viewed solely as a marketing campaign directed at businesses is not likely to yield the desired results. A more effective strategy is to engage businesses as meaningful partners – to work collaboratively with established and emerging businesses to develop the talent Ohio needs to compete in a global knowledge economy.
- The recruitment of employer partners for internships and co-ops is one very critical component of an institution's larger business relations strategy. Recognizing this fact, the guide explores a number of key issues beginning with the importance of developing a clear understanding of why enterprises might be interested in developing internship or co-op programs. For example:
 - » Talking with business partners to fully understand what objectives are driving their interest in work-based learning will help institutions customize their outreach to existing and prospective employers.
 - » Institutions should think carefully about how they frame conversations with prospective partners. The key is to focus on **the intersection of the institution's interests with the employer's interests and needs**.
 - » It's important to understand the major obstacles to a business's willingness to participate in work-based learning partnerships.
 - » Institutions should prepare **clear, detailed guidelines** of their expectations for employers' roles, responsibilities and other requirements associated with offering an internship or co-op program.
 - » Businesses are singularly focused on day-to-day operations. Therefore, the easier colleges and universities can make it for employers to hire interns and co-op students – without compromising program integrity or undermining critical objectives for the institution and the students it serves – the more likely it is that businesses will engage as committed partners in an enterprise that they see as **business friendly**.
 - » Institutions of higher education should connect with local businesses on a regular basis through both traditional and nontraditional methods. Yet, colleges and universities should be respectful of employers' time by pursuing high-quality engagements that have value for both their campuses and business enterprises.

Assessing Performance

- Effective programs are those that can demonstrate positive results. They can document their value as well as the need for change. So high-quality work-based learning programs take performance assessment seriously to gain insight about how well they are operating, to find out what works and what doesn't, to modify or adapt practices to improve program success and to build capacity by enhancing skills and strengthening accountability.
- Assessment results can highlight areas where curriculum changes are called for, where orientation services for students should be improved or where better monitoring of students' work-based learning experiences is needed. They also can help program administrators identify targets of opportunity by highlighting areas where performance is high, identifying industry sectors where the placement of interns can be expanded, or directing attention onto areas where learning experiences are not meeting the expectations of students or the program's business partners.
- Performance assessment really has three components: (1) program assessment, (2) business assessment and (3) student assessment. All three components contribute to the success of internship and cooperative education programs, and **all three need to be addressed using appropriate assessment tools.**
 - » **Program assessment:** How effective and efficient is the institution's work-based learning program in placing students in career-readying internships and cooperative education experiences? And how successful is it in connecting students' classroom and job experiences through an aligned curriculum that is grounded in well-defined, workplace-relevant learning outcomes?
 - » **Business partner assessment:** What value are business partners getting from their participation in the institution's work-based learning program? How do they evaluate the performance of interns placed in their organizations? How do businesses assess their overall engagement in the program's on-campus and job-related activities? And what are their future plans for participating in the program?
 - » **Student assessment:** What is their feedback loop to provide input? What value are students getting from their work-based learning experiences? To what extent are they acquiring the expected knowledge, skills and abilities through an internship or a series of co-operative education experiences required to be successful hires? And how satisfied are they with both the quality of those experiences and the support provided by the institution's internship or co-op program?
- The guide explores many of the feedback mechanisms colleges and universities have found to be effective in these areas.

CONCLUSION: Closing Ohio's Talent Gap

Winning the Race for Tomorrow

Work-based learning is the solution for students who are looking for a “bridge” that connects their classroom learning with future workplace success. It also is the answer for businesses seeking skilled, knowledgeable innovators and problem solvers who are anxious to demonstrate not only what they know, but also what they can do with what they know.

Students and businesses aren't the only winners. Sustainable internships and co-ops also have the capacity to attract, grow and retain the businesses and workers that will drive Ohio's economic recovery and development. Therein lies the value of this guide with its support for colleges and universities that are ready to establish or broaden their work-based learning programs.

The essential products of internships and co-ops are innovation and talent. Work-based learning experiences close the gap between the knowledge and skills students acquire in the classroom and the competencies needed to innovate, solve business and community problems and compete on a global stage. For Ohio, closing this gap is a matter of economic survival.



PART ONE:
A Primer on Internships & Co-ops

INTRODUCTION

Increasing the number of citizens with a college degree or other postsecondary credential or certificate of value in the marketplace is a policy priority for Ohio. That collective aspiration is a matter of economic survival. It's a critical strategy for ensuring abundant economic opportunities for our citizens, enhanced economic competitiveness for our business enterprises and robust economic growth and prosperity for our state.

The key to achieving these objectives is talent – highly educated, highly knowledgeable, highly skilled individuals with work-based learning experiences who are capable of innovating, solving business and community problems and competing on a global stage.

The role Ohio's colleges and universities play in developing a statewide talent pool that attracts business investment and stimulates job creation and economic growth is indisputable. That role is powerful, but evolving. Today, the bar for educational attainment is being raised and the transition from education to workforce is being redefined. Just as postsecondary education is viewed by many as a "must have" requirement for most of the new and emerging high-skill jobs, work-based learning experiences such as internships and co-ops increasingly are viewed as a critical dimension of a college education – and an important "bridge" connecting classroom learning and the workplace.

Redefining the transition from education to workforce

The heightened demand for work-integrated education experiences is being driven by global competition for investment and jobs. Therein lies the greatest value of internships and co-ops: **their potential for attracting, growing and retaining the businesses and workers that will shape Ohio's economic and social vitality through investment, economic growth and job creation.**

Ohio businesses seeking to establish and maintain a competitive edge require a ready supply of skilled, knowledgeable innovators and problem solvers capable of working, adapting and succeeding in a fiercely competitive environment characterized by rapid technological change and advancement. In such an environment a gap often exists between the knowledge and skills students obtain in the classroom and the knowledge and ability skill requirements of the day-to-day workplace. Internships and co-ops help close that gap.

Internships are partnerships between students, institutions of higher education and employers that formally integrate students' academic study with work or community service experience and that:

- Are of a specified and definite duration;
- Evaluate each participating student's performance in the internship position, both from the perspective of the student's institution of higher education and the student's internship employer; and
- May provide participating students with academic credit upon successful completion of the internship, and may provide students with compensation in the form of wages or salaries, stipends or scholarships.

Co-ops (cooperative education) are partnerships between students, institutions of higher education and employers that formally integrate students' academic study with work experience in cooperating employer organizations and:

- Alternate or combine periods of academic study and work experience in appropriate fields as an integral part of student education;
- Provide students with compensation from the cooperative employer in the form of wages or salaries for work performed;
- Evaluate each participating student's performance, both from the perspective of the student's institution and the student's cooperative employer; and
- Provide participating students with academic credit from the institution of higher education upon successful completion of their cooperative education.

DEFINITIONS FROM THE OHIO REVISED CODE, SECTION 3333.71

Tony Walker, Innovation Education Fellow at Harvard University's Technology and Entrepreneurship Center, characterizes the current reality this way: "The world no longer cares *what* you know; the world cares about **what you can do** with what you know" (emphasis added).¹ If this is true, then learning – and more importantly, the application of learning – must expand beyond the classroom to include more hands-on learning experiences focused on solving real-world problems. Where better to apply critical knowledge and skills than in the workplace?

¹ Cited in Thomas L. Friedman, "How to Get a Job," The New York Times, May 29, 2013.

Value of work-based learning is evident and growing

Internships and co-ops are first and foremost for the benefit and education of the student. They allow students to gain valuable knowledge, skills and work experience directly related to and fully integrated with their academic goals and programs of study. Students receive a preview of what it might be like to work in a field of particular interest to them. They also benefit from exposure to and contacts with a network of professionals in that field. And, of course, the experiences students have and the knowledge and skills they acquire through an internship or co-op enhance their appeal to prospective employers.

Among the many benefits for participating businesses is the chance to observe and evaluate prospective employees; identify and train future employees; increase employee retention rates; improve productivity; provide training and development opportunities for managers and mentors; and more. Internships and co-ops also provide businesses with a relationship that allows them to provide input to colleges and universities regarding the relevance and effectiveness of the classroom experiences and educational programming those institutions are providing.

Nearly two-thirds of the nation's graduating seniors from the Class of 2013 took part in an internship or a cooperative education program during their years pursuing a bachelor's degree. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' 2013 Student Survey, 63.2 percent of graduating seniors reported having taken part in an internship, co-op or both – up from 57 percent of seniors from the Class of 2008.

SOURCE: NACE's Class of 2013 Student Survey, conducted from February 15, 2013 to April 30, 2013

Making education and training more relevant and effective

Businesses today routinely expect college graduates to have real-world work experiences and to be able to use the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom in a work-based setting. Recognizing the value of work-based learning in building Ohio's capacity for innovation and discovery, the state's education policy leaders have directed substantial funds to support increased internships and co-ops on college and university campuses across Ohio.

This commitment is reflected in the Ohio Board of Regents' Ohio Means Internships & Co-ops Program and the Ohio Third Frontier Internship Program. Through these initiatives, both public and private dollars are being leveraged to provide for-credit, work-based learning experiences for students in key industries vital to the state's economic recovery and development.

Not all internships and co-ops are created equal

Businesses start internship and co-op programs for a variety of reasons – from allowing employers to screen and work with potential entry-level employees prior to making a full-time commitment to reducing turnover and the need for training among entry-level employees, to creating a campus “buzz” that builds the business’s brand recognition and value – and expands the pool of interested candidates to meet future recruiting needs.

Many work-integrated learning programs offer serious, meaningful opportunities for authentic experiential learning through work experiences linked directly to well-defined learning outcomes. Lower quality programs are often part-time temporary jobs available to a wide population or unchallenging work that a business would simply rather not assign to permanent staff.

This diversity also is reflected across participating campuses and, in some cases, within institutions. Some colleges and universities have a centralized internship, service learning or experiential learning office. Other institutions have adopted decentralized approaches that allow departments and colleges to develop and operate their own programs with diverse standards, expectations and results.

In addition to the primer on internships and co-ops that is the heart of this guide, *Harnessing Ohio’s Talent* features an extensive discussion of how colleges and universities can develop and nurture sustainable relationships with their business partners.

Among the questions addressed in this guide are:

- What have we learned from the experiences of those colleges and universities that have already established internships or co-ops about the best ways to design these programs?
- What have we learned about how to engage students and build campus-level support for experiential learning?
- What can institutions do to develop and nurture relationships with their business partners that are **sustainable** and **relevant** to the state’s commitment to grow the talent that is needed to fill positions in industries that have been identified as being critical to Ohio’s economic recovery and development?
- What can institutions do to ensure that their students – once on the job – have positive experiences?
- What have we learned about how to evaluate these programs to ensure that all students have career-readying learning experiences?

Ohio's Interns and Co-op Students Speak

"I benefited from my internship in many ways. Not only did I receive real world work experience and solidify my career path of choice, but I was also able to expand my networking base and was able to establish relationships with colleagues that I will be in touch with for many years to come. Through my internship I learned that the willingness to learn and hard work are just as important, if not more important than having the knowledge base required for the job. A solid understanding of work related material is important, but an open mind on the job is essential as well. I was able to develop many technical skills on the job, but also was able to develop skills that cannot be learned through training. I learned to interact with clients in a professional manner and developed interpersonal and teamwork skills by working in groups in a fast paced environment."

— **Aly Sarosy**, The Ohio State University, Ernst & Young Intern

"I learned so much about circuits and electrical engineering [in the first internship]. In the proposal group, you get to work on your professional skills more than anything. You have to talk with people, learn the etiquette of conference calls, the whole nine yards."

— **Joe Trimble**, University of Toledo, ABB Intern

"My co-op experience was absolutely invaluable. I learned more about dealing with people there than I did across eight semesters at UD. Being in an actual industrial environment and learning which of my skills and what knowledge I actually needed was truly eye-opening."

— **Emily Irwin**, University of Dayton, MillerCoors Intern

"Experience in the workplace is as marketable as your degree – maybe more so in some cases. So being able to put the TRECA experience on my resume is going to be a real advantage while job hunting."

— **Don King**, Marion Technical College, TRECA Intern

Defining the guide's key audiences

This guide has been written with three audiences in mind. The first is postsecondary institutions – both public and private – that understand the value of an institution-wide commitment to experiential learning and business engagement. Some already have well-developed work-based learning programs; others are just beginning to develop such initiatives. The information and tools contained in this guide should help all such institutions improve – and sustain – the experiential education component of their curriculum.

The second audience is postsecondary institutions that understand, philosophically, the value of experiential learning, but have not made an institution-wide commitment. This guide should give staff at these institutions the “ammunition” needed to convince key stakeholders that a large, sustainable endeavor to do so should be launched now.

The guide's third audience is postsecondary institutions that have some major- or course-based experiential learning programs or a program in a single college, either because faculty members have championed them or a certifying agency requires them. For many of these institutions, however, experiential learning has not been an institutional priority. This guide can serve as a catalyst for helping key decision-makers to see the true value of internships and co-op education in providing challenging, relevant learning experiences that prepare students for success upon graduation from college. It also can be used to show them how to develop the sustainable relationships with businesses that make these learning experiences possible.

Frontline Perspective

Building talent pipelines, boosting organizational productivity

In Northeast Ohio, the Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education (NOCHE) partners with colleges and universities on expanding internships and co-ops to develop the talent pool necessary to ensure Ohio's economic competitiveness. For example, through relationships with colleges and universities and consulting with businesses, NOCHE created 60 new internships at 30 entrepreneurial companies in 2013, helping to connect talent to the innovation economy. Creating internships and co-ops leads to sustainable programs when businesses know they can find the talent they need and interns know they can find the jobs they want.

In Northeast Ohio, internships lead to jobs. This year, 69 percent of businesses offered full-time positions to their interns. Furthermore, interns do meaningful work, with 34 percent of their time allotted to project management tasks and 31 percent allotted to analytical problem solving, on average.

In a 2012 NOCHE/ERC study, businesses reported \$2,411 saved in recruitment and hiring costs and \$1,659 saved in new-hire training and onboarding costs, on average, per intern, converted to a full-time employee. Businesses saved an average of \$13,513 in salary and benefits by hiring an intern versus a full-time employee for entry-level tasks. Hiring an intern saved a full-time, higher skilled employee an average of 14.6 hours per intern per week.

The bottom line is that businesses use internships and co-op programs to build their talent pipelines and boost organizational productivity.

— Shawn M. Brown
Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education

Benefits of Internships and Cooperative Education

For students . . .

- *Students who participate in work-based learning have improved classroom performance and problem-solving skills; internships and co-ops give students an opportunity to develop their technical aptitude and proficiency and to strengthen their soft skills, including working in teams, communication and leadership.*
- *Students who participate in co-ops and internships complete college at higher rates than those who do not have these experiences.*
- *Students with internship or co-op experiences are more likely to receive full-time job offers than students without these experiences; and interns are better prepared for the demands of the workplace and are more likely to be hired and receive higher starting salaries.*

For colleges and universities . . .

- *Internships and co-ops guide educational institutions' planning to ensure academic programs are responsive to businesses' needs by facilitating employer involvement in curriculum development and content.*
- *Co-ops aid in student recruitment and building enrollments.*
- *Colleges and universities build valuable relationships with businesses that can be leveraged for additional benefit over time.*

For business partners . . .

- *In 2012, the conversion rate for interns to full-time employees was 57.7 percent; the highest level since the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) survey began in 2001. This conversion rate may be a direct result of the growing level of participation in an internship or co-op experience: 63.2 percent of graduating seniors had such an experience in 2013, the highest level of participation since the survey started in 2007.*
- *When hired in a permanent position, employees with internship or co-op experience assimilate faster to their new roles and have shorter learning curves than external hires.*
- *Students can assist a business in applying the latest business strategies and techniques by bringing new ideas to the enterprise.*
- *Work-based learning allows businesses to stay connected to the campus and community – it increases businesses' visibility on campus as interns act as advocates in recruiting other students.*

For the community . . .

- *Internships and co-ops help states and regions retain more recent college graduates.*
- *Stronger ties between colleges/universities and local employers help graduates, particularly non-natives, learn about local job opportunities and form networks in the region.*

THE END IS THE BEGINNING: Developing a Campus Vision

Ohio's leaders have made the development of a more competitive, high-growth economy that generates the high-value, high-wage jobs of the future a priority. To position the state to succeed in a global economy, they have set two long-term goals: (1) to establish a firm foundation of ongoing technology-intensive development; and (2) to develop a knowledge-based workforce with the requisite skills to promote and support technology commercialization and growth. Actions to achieve these goals will lead Ohio as it experiences the continued restructuring of its historical manufacturing economy.

The state's vision creates opportunities for its colleges and universities to pursue deeper collaborations with business enterprises in order to improve economic productivity, prosperity and vitality – both statewide and at a regional level.

Embracing this moment, the Ohio Board of Regents, along with the state's colleges and universities, has made a historic commitment – to strengthen higher education-business collaborations for the purpose of promoting statewide and regional economic development and creating new high-value jobs for the benefit of all Ohioans. The state's support for internship and cooperative education programs reflects that commitment.

From Regents priority to institutional practice

For many colleges and universities, the Regents' support for work-integrated learning only confirms years of institutional practice. For example, at the University of Cincinnati (UC), cooperative education has a long historic tradition. UC is an academic powerhouse that provides students with more than 5,600 learning experiences annually with companies like General Electric, Duke Energy, LPK, Procter & Gamble and hundreds more.

UC is not alone. Internships and co-ops are integral parts of the curriculum at other higher education institutions across Ohio (e.g., The Ohio State University, The University Akron, Sinclair Community College, Cincinnati State Technical & Community College, The University of Toledo, Antioch College, and Lorain County Community College). Supported by funding from the Board of Regents, nearly two dozen other institutions are launching or expanding their offerings in this area. Yet, at many other institutions, work-based education is still an undeveloped or untapped resource.

Building a campus vision

Designing and implementing a new – or expanded – work-integrated learning program is not a simple task. It necessitates changes in the recruitment, advising and evaluation of students. It requires changes to the curriculum and redefines the responsibilities and

expectations of faculty members. It demands new and sustainable relationships with business enterprises, which will provide job placements for students and may expect to become engaged on curriculum alignment issues.

From an organizational perspective, these are large-scale changes. As a first step forward, colleges and universities need a compelling “change vision.” They need a clear picture of what things are going to look like after the changes are made to incorporate work-based learning on campus. And they need to identify – and communicate -- up front how faculty and staff, students, parents and families, business partners and the community will benefit from the anticipated changes. This kind of change vision serves to motivate people, guide them and keep them focused on the opportunities that are driving the planned changes.

John Kotter, professor emeritus at the Harvard Business School, sees the value of a clear vision this way:

First, by clarifying the general direction for change... it simplifies hundreds or thousands of more detailed decisions. Second, it motivates people to take action in the right direction even if the initial steps are personally painful. Third, it helps coordinate the actions of different people ... in a remarkably fast and efficient way.²

Kotter asserts that a clear vision is more powerful than an authoritarian decree and can accomplish far more than micromanagement. From his perspective, a campus’s change vision becomes the catalyst and connective tissue for future implementation efforts. He suggests that an effective change vision has six key characteristics:

- **Imaginable** – conveying a clear picture of what the future will look like
- **Desirable** – appealing to the long-term interest of those who have a stake in the enterprise
- **Feasible** – containing realistic and attainable goals
- **Focused** – clear enough to provide guidance in decision making
- **Flexible** – general enough to allow individual initiative and alternative responses in light of changing conditions
- **Communicable** – easy to communicate; successfully explained within five minutes³

Articulating the vision

Each campus needs to craft its own messages reflecting its academic traditions, the purposes of its work-based education initiatives and its unique strategies to execute the change vision. Ultimately, these messages need to educate and motivate – and resonate with a range of audiences, including key administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents and families, prospective and current business partners, and the community.

² John P. Kotter. *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996, pp. 68-69.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 72

Even though a campus vision will vary depending upon the nature of the changes the institution is making, consideration should be given to four imperatives that lead to sustainable and relevant programs.

1. Internship and co-op programs are business-friendly.

Businesses stand to gain from well-organized programs. Research shows that businesses tend to hire interns and co-op students in order to increase their own productivity and develop a talent pipeline. The best programs make it easy for businesses to identify and attract top college students for their internship and co-op positions. This involves both high-tech and high-touch approaches that include easy-to-use online access points, databases and staff members who respond promptly to the needs of every business.

2. Internship and co-op programs are student-centered.

Student learning is emphasized, suggesting strong curricular connections supported by faculty members and academic advisors. Students desire internships because they are interested in learning more about an occupation or workplace setting and they want to improve their prospects for job offers after graduating from college. For this purpose, many programs have guaranteed student presence in curriculum meetings, established platforms for student feedback and developed offices that are accessible for students to meet with staff on short notice during their search for a position.

3. Internship and co-op programs are open to students of all ages and backgrounds.

College students are diverse in many respects; they come from different racial, ethnic, social and economic backgrounds. Increasingly, Ohio's college-going population is nontraditional, which means they may be older, attending college part-time and/or juggling job and family responsibilities. Many nontraditional students and first-generation students want internships that augment classroom learning or facilitate a career transition.

4. Internship and co-op programs are building the talent that will revitalize Ohio's economy.

The talent produced through today's internships and co-ops benefits the larger society by advancing science and innovation, and by growing the business enterprises that will create jobs and drive economic recovery. Today's work-based learning programs represent a commitment to use higher education's assets to remake and rebuild Ohio's economy. Such a commitment was first reflected in the Morrill Act of 1862, which brought higher education to millions by creating the land-grant university system to conserve, encourage and promote agriculture, which at the time employed more than half the nation's population.

Communicating a sense of urgency

In addition to these four imperatives, colleges and universities should consider an additional message: **It all starts with a sense of urgency.** Kotter asserts that an effective change vision must confront the power and pervasiveness of complacency. The solution is a sense of urgency that tells people – in this case, institutional leaders, faculty, students and business partners – why change is needed now, not later when it might be easier or more convenient. A sense of urgency also convinces people that the benefits of change are so significant that stakeholders across the campus, and beyond its boundaries, will provide the leadership and energy required to make work-based learning an integral part of the institution's academic mission and offerings.

Frontline Perspective

One size doesn't fit all: How institutions can achieve simplification from complexity

Academic diversity is highly valued in our higher education system. It's a source of learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. It's also the basis for an assortment of policies and procedures across institutions – and sometimes among colleges and departments within them.

This diversity is seen in institutions' work-based academic programs, where an array of policies and practices often places hurdles in front of students and business partners – making programs less student-centered and business friendly.

What can an institution do?

- *It can compile a list of the disparate policies and procedures, and gather data showing which programs are most successful in terms of student/business participation and curricular strength. This information can fuel an institution-wide dialogue.*
- *It can form a work-based education task force composed of faculty members, administrators and employers to determine how to establish a more uniform set of policies and practices to meet the needs of students and businesses.*
- *It can establish a single entry point where businesses can access students from multiple colleges and departments, simplifying interviewing and hiring for prospective interns and employers. This might be done through an electronic gateway site linked to all participating colleges and departments.*

It's a simple idea designed to make internships and co-ops more accessible – and to make learning outside the classroom a fully integrated part of our education system.

– Marvin J. Roth, M.J. Roth Consulting

PLANNING & EXECUTION: Keys to Program Success

Great programs don't just happen. They don't become effective over time simply because someone had a good idea or a powerful vision. Even the boldest of visions must be transformed into reality.

Successful programs happen because people make a commitment, work hard and smart, modify their organization's habits and priorities, form new partnerships that reach beyond traditional boundaries and have the persistence to prevail.

Every higher education institution must determine how its organizational structure will support internships and the businesses that need them. Some will decide that a centralized approach is best while others will find that decentralization is a better solution. Each institution must gauge the thinking of its faculty and staff, and then define roles and responsibilities accordingly. Each institution must set its own goals and timelines, and then identify strategies to achieve them. And each institution must identify the needs of and opportunities with its potential business partners before choosing among its business engagement options.

Instead of trying to find the one best way to design their programs, colleges and universities should consider and address a number of critical issues. Specifically, they need to take seven proven steps to overcome the common barriers to producing successful change – although some institutions will find themselves working on multiple steps at the same time. In either case, the sequence of steps described below offers a useful roadmap for colleges and universities to generate momentum and build long-term support.

STEP #1: Assess the internship/co-op landscape

As a first step, institutions need to learn as much as possible about their internship/co-op programs. What other institutions offer internship programs? How many interns are being placed in jobs? What companies are hiring interns – and in what fields? What work-based learning opportunities already exist on campus, and what types of support can be provided to grow, strengthen or centralize current programs?

Other questions will require an evaluation of the institution and its students. What colleges and departments will be included in the internship or co-op program? Are other institutions placing interns in these academic disciplines? What kinds of jobs are most appropriate for these students, and are there businesses in the community – or in the state or region – that would be interested in hiring interns in these fields? All of these questions address marketability – the size of the internship market and the expected competitiveness of the institution's students in that market. And in answering these questions, institutions should make use of all available data to fully understand likely student outcomes and market conditions.

Finally, colleges and universities should take a serious look at a number of legal issues that are relevant for internship and co-op programs. Employment law is most important, spanning an array of issues such as an intern's employment status, employer non-compete and non-disclosure agreements, workers' compensation issues, safety and harassment policies, termination guidelines, the hiring of foreign students on study visas, the Affordable Care Act, and unpaid student interns. Program staff members need to be aware of FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and how it dictates how and what student information can be shared with employers and parents.

While it can be easy to dismiss most of these issues as matters of concern for business partners, institutions would be well-advised to get a good grasp on the legal ramifications of these and related matters. The best way to do this is to consult with the institution's legal counsel or to contact an employment law professional.

STEP #2: Create a sense of ownership

How do create an internship or co-op program that promises students high-quality, work-based learning experiences?

The solution is to build a sense of ownership – to get buy-in for a good idea – and to create a “guiding coalition” capable of driving the reengineering of an institution's academic program.⁴ What is needed is a team of supporters with the right composition and sufficient credibility to be trusted, heard and followed as the program is being developed and executed.

⁴ John Kotter, *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996, pp. 51-66.

Do all interns and co-ops need to be paid?

Typically, co-ops are paid whereas internships may be paid or unpaid. The matter of whether or not interns should be paid is a subject of increasing debate. Federal labor laws spell out the conditions under which interns must be paid minimum wage and overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act. It is now highly recommended by organizations like the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) that interns be paid.

Some advocates argue that students deserve to be paid for the work they perform, and that not paying them can create a significant financial burden for many low- and moderate-income students who cannot afford to forgo being paid. Other people argue that costs associated with paying interns could deter employers from offering internships.

The Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Board of Regents have made it clear that the state of Ohio strongly prefers paid internships and requires paid co-ops. Not surprisingly, increasing numbers of businesses are realizing that paying interns has a positive impact on student motivation and performance.

Buy-in starts at the top – the Board of Trustees, the president, provost and other top academic officers. Position and expertise are important. Leaders have a unique capacity to confirm and legitimize the campus’s new direction. They also have the ability to “release the brainpower of their organizations” by encouraging people to work together to achieve great things.⁵ Without genuine and vocal support at the top, buy-in across the campus will most likely be shallow, giving the program’s critics ample opportunity to delay and distract.

Yet, executive-level leadership is not enough. The guiding coalition needs to include a wide range of stakeholders, including faculty, business and community leaders, and students. Beyond the composition of this coalition, a successful change effort can be strengthened by the following:

- **Reliance on a clear and compelling campus vision**, which is far more effective than an authoritarian decree. People need a clear picture of what work-integrated learning looks like, how it is going to impact faculty responsibilities and expectations, how it is going to change the curriculum and how students who participate in work-based learning are going to benefit.
- **A widespread sense of urgency**, which tells people why work-based learning should be an integral part of the institution’s academic mission and offerings – and why they are needed now.
- **The availability of incentives**, which can change people’s assessment of a work-based learning initiative. Incentives can come in many forms, both tangible and intangible, and they can be targeted to individuals, academic units or the campus as a whole. Incentives that have been used by some institutions include funding for departments and colleges, faculty evaluations and compensation, and campus-wide recognition for academic units based on their support for and success with work-based learning.
- **Genuine efforts to address issues that are important to key stakeholder groups**, which perhaps is best exemplified by the concerns of faculty members who may be protective of a more traditional curriculum and, therefore, suspicious of credit-bearing, work-based learning experiences. Similarly, there should be efforts to demonstrate how the program will be truly business-friendly. For these stakeholders, the guiding coalition needs to show how experiential learning will enhance, not undermine, curriculum standards/expectations and business success. Supporters need to emphasize the multiple benefits of a focused, relevant, sustainable partnership between the institution and the business community.

⁵ Warren Bennis, “Becoming a Leader of Leaders,” in *Rethinking the Future*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1997.

STEP #3: Prepare a strategic action plan

Rooted in their initial assessment of the landscape for internships and co-ops, colleges and universities need to develop a comprehensive plan of action to help build a sustainable foundation that achieves the following objectives:

- **Establishes short- and long-term goals**, and sets both strategies and tactics to reach them.
- **Identifies significant infrastructure needs**, ensuring that a new or expanded internship or co-op program has the organizational direction, support and resources required to operate efficiently and effectively.
- **Addresses core curriculum issues**, ensuring that work-based learning is fully integrated into students' academic programs and that faculty are engaged in making curricular alignment a priority across the system.
- **Defines anticipated learning outcomes**, which (a) describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students will be expected to acquire through an internship or a series of co-operative education experiences; and (b) establish measures of success along with a plan for collecting data. These outcomes must be measurable in the broadest sense (i.e., identifiable, but not necessarily countable). Typically, outcomes can be demonstrated, articulated, illustrated, conducted, defined, applied, composed, integrated or created.
- **Spells out a business engagement strategy** that leads to sustainable partnerships through which private-sector organizations become involved in the design and implementation of the work-based learning program, provide research opportunities for faculty and create jobs for the program's participating students. This imperative will be examined in greater detail below.
- **Assigns responsibilities and timelines** for all elements of the plan, making certain operational units and staff members are accountable for actions taken and progress made.

STEP #4: Recruit, advise and prepare students for experiential learning

Internships are among the most important experiences for students' long-term career success. Yet, research and experience reveal that too often there is a lack of support for students' engagement, both before and during their internships.

On most campuses, responsibility for helping students develop, evaluate and/or carry out education, career and employment decisions resides with a career services office or center. Career services at the majority of colleges and universities support the institution's academic and experiential programs, as well as promote student learning and development. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), career services should assist students in several areas including the following:

- Develop self-knowledge related to career choice and work performance by identifying, assessing and understanding their competencies, interests, values and personal characteristics;
- Obtain educational and occupational information to aid their career and educational planning and to develop their understanding of the world of work;
- Select personally suitable academic programs and work-based learning opportunities that optimize future educational and employment options;
- Prepare to find suitable employment by developing job-search skills, effective candidate presentation skills and an understanding of the fit between their competencies and both occupational and job requirements; and
- Gain experience through student activities, community service, student employment, research projects, cooperative education, internships and other opportunities.⁶
- Career fit assessment, exploration, and decision-making.

This is a serious responsibility. Noting that career services should support the institution's outcomes assessment endeavors, NACE continues, "As career issues are addressed by different units within the institution, career services should provide leadership to the institution on career development concerns and linkages and/or coordination among career-related programs and services where appropriate."⁷

As they contemplate new or emerging work-integrated learning initiatives, institutions need to think seriously about the capabilities and commitments of their career services units. Also, since career services practitioners reflect diverse institutional types, reporting structures, educational backgrounds and experiences, they should address the issue of individual practitioner competencies to better define what career services professionals should know and be able to do.⁸

All of this has important implications for the way interns and co-op students are recruited, advised and prepared for work-based learning experiences. Most importantly, it points to the need for an advising model that assists career counselors in preparing students for work-based learning experiences. This model needs to encompass traditional academic and career counseling perspectives, but also perspectives from educational psychology that can help students get ready for the unfamiliar terrain of a professional workplace. Preparing students for work-based learning experiences allows programs to set expectations of student behavior and participation, which helps institutions maintain strong relationships with their business partners.

6 National Association of Colleges and Employers, "Professional Standards for College & University Career Services," cited on NACE website, March, 2010.

7 Ibid.

8 Institutions are urged to review NACE's effort to develop universally accepted individual practitioner competencies. See National Association of Colleges and Employments, *Professional Competencies for College and University Career Services Practitioners*, 2013. Appendix A identifies the tasks performed and the skills and competencies required to execute the responsibilities of a work-integrated learning coordinator as well as other program resources. National Academy for Work-integrated Learning, "A Professional Inventory for Coordinators: Function, Skills and Competencies," 1999.

Addressing this issue, a recent analysis cites research indicating that “traditional views of knowledge transfer from college to work and the supposed straightforward development of employability skills for ... jobs [are] just too simplistic to encompass the reality of how students enter the world of work.” The analysis adds, “The skills students need to succeed in a workplace are not necessarily linked to skills gained in academia, and have more to do with adapting to a new environment and aligning identity to fit into the workplace than with using the tools brought from an academic setting.”⁹

Transitioning into a workplace means entering a new environment and being successful there by understanding workplace practices and behaviors. Clearly, colleges and universities have a responsibility to equip their work-based learning students with the “employability skills” and perspectives that lead to workplace success. Institutions also should ensure that their students have the ability to tell the story of their knowledge, skills and experiences to future employers.

STEP #5: Prepare to assess student, business and program performance

Performance reviews are a critical element of any work-based learning program. Usually, assessment discussions focus on students, who get regular, constructive feedback from their work-site supervisors. In most programs, businesses also provide written evaluations to the college or university at the end of an internship or co-op experience. Institutions typically generate their own student evaluations and/or conduct exit interviews to determine student benefits and business fit.

But effective work-based learning programs need more – they need feedback mechanisms for assessing all essential elements of the program, including the performance of business partners and the institution’s relationship with those enterprises. This kind of assessment requires the intentional collection of appropriate data – both quantitative and qualitative – from multiple sources along with the capacity to analyze those data on a continuing basis.

For this purpose, colleges and universities usually evaluate the performance of businesses as hosts for their students. In a later section, this guide will examine some best practices in this area.

⁹ Natalie Lundsteen, “Navigating Transition: A New Approach to Internship Advising,” NACE Journal, November 2011.

Frontline Perspective

Work-based learning and adult students

The Chinese word for “crisis” is composed of two characters that represent “danger” and “opportunity.” So we shouldn’t be surprised that it is often a crisis – the loss of a job – that prompts adults to embark on a college education, seeking the opportunity to create a better future for themselves and their families. These nontraditional students frequently start in a certificate program at a community college, but once they have gained more confidence, they may go on to complete an Associate degree before transferring to a four-year university.

These nontraditional students often cycle in and out of college in response to changing family and financial needs. Many campuses have found that paid internships can help nontraditional students persist in their studies. But it can be complicated and requires a lot of flexibility. Nontraditional students may be receiving unemployment and must consider the impact a paid internship will have on their finances. A short-term placement may not be worth the risk. Adults may be concerned about changes family members will have to make to accommodate the internship.

Here are four tips for programs that are flexible enough to meet adults’ needs:

- *Summer only and rotational co-ops do not work for many adult students. Part-time opportunities that continue across multiple semesters are preferred.*
- *Employers that create year-round internship and co-op opportunities often are able to retain students – both traditional and nontraditional – throughout their time on campus, even hiring them upon graduation.*
- *Student and employer needs do not always align with academic calendars; work-based learning opportunities that continue across semester lines can be a win-win-win for students, employers and the college.*
- *“Co-op in place” at the student’s existing employer may provide an opportunity for the student to contribute to and gain experience in a different functional area of the business. Also, parallel co-oping provides students the opportunity to gain work experience and be in school at the same time.*

Flexibility is a key to success for adult learners.

— Marcia Jones
Lorain County Community College

STEP #6: Create change for a new work-based learning culture

In his analysis of transformational change, John Kotter observes that change sticks only “when it becomes ‘the way we do business around here,’ when it seeps into the very bloodstream of the work unit or corporate body.” Kotter continues, “Until new behaviors are rooted in social norms and shared values, they are always subject to degradation as soon as the pressures associated with a change effort are removed.”¹⁰

It all comes down to creating work-based learning programs in a new culture that values experience. But what does it take to do this? First, it takes a conscious effort over an extended period of time to show people how work-based experiences are improving student learning – both inside and beyond classroom walls.

Second, it requires actions over time that ensure the next generation of campus leaders – from the Board of Trustees to the president’s office to the faculty senate – value and embrace the priority given to work-based learning.

STEP #7: Persist

The key to building a high-quality internship or cooperative education program is leadership – not only at the top of the college or university, but also across the institution and into the program’s business partners. But something else is needed: the persistence that allows people to continue working even when the sense of urgency wanes and the change initiative matures.

And with persistence there’s the counsel to be patient. The development of successful internship and co-op programs takes a lot of time and energy. But when you consider their benefits for students, for campuses and for industries that have been identified as being critical to Ohio’s economic recovery, it’s worth it.

¹⁰ Kotter, *Leading Change*, pp. 14-15.

Frontline Perspective

On integrating separate co-op and internship programs on a single campus

Creating a campus-wide program and brand strengthens the message to all stakeholders. This can be difficult to achieve, no matter the size of your campus. In a centralized structure, it's important to build awareness among campus thought leaders and offer a program that gives students easy access while meeting the needs of departments, faculty and staff.

Some strategies for collaborating and integration:

- **Develop the key components of your co-op or /internship program.** Realize that flexibility may be necessary to meet discipline-specific or market needs. But the key elements that define your program should be steadfast.
- **Build a reflective learning component for the student experience.** Supporting student learning beyond the placement adds value to the student experience, creates measurable outcomes and provides a level of support that is difficult to maintain within an academic department.
- **Recognize unmet needs on campus as well as duplication of services.** Review current course offerings that may have an experiential component. Meet with the instructor to understand the objectives and opportunities for your program to provide support with sensitivity to program ownership issues.
- **Raise awareness with academic advisors, curriculum committees and student organizations.** Build consensus and recognition on your campus. Hold a campus community event or luncheon for academic advisors and key faculty/staff to showcase success and opportunities for collaboration.
- **Focus on specific programs that have strong partnership and collaborative potential for use as pilot or model programs.** Recognition of experiential learning credit hours toward degree completion will strengthen a partnership.
- **Communicate with on-campus stakeholders.** Develop and distribute widely a term-by-term or annual report addressing the interests of staff and faculty.
- **Develop an ambassador program.** No one can tell the story quite like successful students and pleased employers. Give them the opportunity to provide program feedback but also develop a platform for them to tell their stories of success.

— Jill Collet
University of Cincinnati

PART TWO:

Engaging Business,
Strengthening Accountability

DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE RELATIONSHIPS WITH BUSINESS PARTNERS

The cornerstone of a successful internship and co-op program is the development of sustainable relationships with business partners. The fact is, all successful work-based learning experiences are collaborative, mutually beneficial partnerships between institutions of higher education and business enterprises.

More than just marketing

Marketing an institution's internship or co-op program certainly is one dimension of an institution's outreach to prospective employer partners – but any outreach effort viewed solely as a marketing campaign directed at businesses is not likely to yield the desired results. A more effective strategy is to engage businesses as meaningful partners – and as we all know, engagement is all about relationship building and collaboration. It's about institutions of higher education working collaboratively with established and emerging businesses to develop the talent Ohio needs to compete in a global knowledge economy.

The challenge here is to do more than simply find employers willing to hire student interns and co-op students. The real objective reflects a much bigger picture with much higher stakes. It's about getting real-world business input on academic programs and course design to help achieve better alignment between the knowledge and skills students acquire in the college classroom and the knowledge and skills required for success in today's workplace. It's about funding faculty and student research and facilitating the commercialization of that research to create new products and technologies. And, it's about hiring

Relevance is critical to attracting committed partners

Work-based learning is a major strategy for providing Ohio businesses with a ready supply of the skilled workers they need, particularly in high-skill, in-demand jobs in industries that have been identified as strategically important to Ohio's continued economic recovery: advanced manufacturing, financial services, information services and software, automotive, aerospace and aviation, agribusiness and food processing, polymers and chemicals, biohealth and energy.

In this regard, work-based learning experiences are part of a larger effort to better align workforce capabilities with workplace expectations and requirements – to give Ohio a competitive edge in the fierce competition for business investment and job creation.

With this objective in mind, it is critical for Ohio's colleges and universities to develop internship and co-op programs in concert with and supportive of local, regional and statewide economic development priorities and planning.

students not just as interns and co-op students, but also as permanent employees after graduation.

Collectively these various objectives make a strong case for viewing the recruitment of employer partners for internships and co-ops as one very critical component of an institution's larger business relations strategy. That more expansive undertaking begins with a clear understanding of the motivations of your target audience – and prospective partner.

Understanding the objectives – and the obstacles

For institutions seeking to foster meaningful experiential learning partnerships with businesses, a good starting place is to understand the various reasons enterprises might be interested in developing internship or co-op programs. Most importantly, businesses are focused on adding to their success – to their bottom line – so the common reasons for embracing work-based learning programs include the following:

- Identifying motivated students to fill immediate labor needs
- Creating a talent pipeline for meeting future workforce needs
- Providing professional development opportunities for emerging leaders
- Bringing new perspectives and fresh ideas to the organization
- Improving recruitment and retention results while reducing the time and other costs required to hire permanent employees
- Building the company's visibility and reputation

Talking with business partners to fully understand which of these objectives, or others, are most important in driving their interest in offering internships or co-ops will help institutions customize their outreach to existing and prospective employers. Institutions of higher education should think carefully about how they frame conversations with prospective partners. The key is focusing on the intersection of the institution's interests with the employer's interests and needs.

It's also important to understand the major obstacles to a business's willingness to participate in work-based learning partnerships. Some of the most common are the following:

- Lack of familiarity with the responsibilities associated with internship and co-op programs
- Concerns about the time and resources required to set up a program, identify appropriate assignments and responsibilities, provide training/mentoring and participate in evaluating the participating students' performance
- Uncertainty about how to reach and identify students who are well-matched to the employer's specific needs

- Confusion about legal issues regarding internships/co-ops
- The cost of paying students for their work

Frontline Perspective

Workforce Development: A challenge for every successful business

Phil Parker, president and CEO of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce, says it well: “One of the top issues business leaders constantly think about is the need to grow and retain a talented and motivated workforce. We are blessed to have outstanding educational institutions in our region working on our skill set needs. We also know that one of the best ways to recruit and retain new talent is by providing internship and co-op work opportunities.”

The Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education (SOCHE) is the collaborative infrastructure for 20 colleges and universities seeking to ensure citizens are educated, employed and engaged in their communities. SOCHE has long operated a turnkey internship service and typically employs approximately 150 interns annually, working on site at various public and private agencies. Additionally, SOCHE facilitates the alignment of the internship and co-op functions of its member institutions with the needs of the regional economic development community.

In 2012, SOCHE established an umbrella effort, the 20 by 20 Challenge, to offer over-all coordination of the portfolio of services targeting 20,000 internships and co-ops per year in southwestern Ohio by the year 2020.

— Dusty Hall
Southwestern Coalition for Higher Education

Communication and support

As in any successful partnership, communication and support are keys to long-term viability. To help employers overcome the common obstacles noted above, institutions of higher education should prepare clear, detailed guidelines of their expectations for employers’ roles, responsibilities and other requirements associated with offering an internship or co-op program. Institutions also need to be prepared to offer assistance that makes it easy for employers to engage as a committed partner in providing meaningful work-based learning experiences.

At a minimum, institutions should be ready to assist businesses – particularly smaller businesses with more limited resources and experience – with all of the following: (1) developing the program, (2) involving faculty to ensure curriculum alignment, (3) creating position descriptions, (4) posting available positions, (5) connecting employers to students, (6) screening/interviewing students, and (7) creating evaluation tools.

Businesses are singularly focused on day-to-day operations. The easier colleges and universities can make it for employers to hire interns and co-op students – without compromising program integrity or undermining critical objectives for the institution and the students it serves – the more likely it is that businesses will be willing to take that step and engage as a committed partner in an enterprise that they see as business friendly.

Tactical ideas for forging strong relationships

It is important for institutions of higher education to connect with local businesses on a regular basis through both traditional and nontraditional methods. Yet, colleges and universities should be respectful of employers' time by pursuing high-quality engagements that have value for both their campuses and business enterprises. Following are a few ideas that many colleges and universities have found to be productive:

- Attending networking events sponsored by organizations such as local chambers of commerce, industry trade associations and other civic groups to identify potential partnership needs and leads
- Leveraging existing relationships with businesses in capacities unrelated to internships and co-ops
- Capitalizing on alumni relationships to open doors to prospective partners or to advocate for internships and co-ops with alumni business contacts
- Engaging existing and prospective partners in strategic ways such as shaping academic programming, conducting special events and evaluating programs and services
- Recognizing business partners publicly for their involvement
- Leveraging personal and professional relationships institution leaders and faculty currently have with businesses
- Working with college/university media relations to promote successful internship and co-op programs and experiences
- Inviting businesses to serve on advisory committees for internships, co-ops and other academic programs
- Inviting representatives of participating businesses to teach courses on campus, and soliciting externship opportunities for faculty in these same organizations – to promote curricular alignment
- Providing a single point of contact across departments or colleges for interested businesses

- Developing and/or participating in regional efforts such as SOCHE (Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education) and NOCHE (Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education) to connect employers with students seeking internships and co-ops¹¹

In addition, some institutions have taken customer relationship building to the next level by using such tactics as the following:

- Encouraging business partners to participate on college and department curriculum advisory committees to help bring new perspectives and leading-edge information to faculty
- Creating a business partner group and inviting a select number of employers to attend a yearly information exchange meeting – an opportunity for employers to tell campus leaders about what they are doing and their upcoming needs, and for the institution’s work-based learning leaders to tell about what’s going on in their office
- Seeking business evaluations at every juncture where assistance is provided to them, capitalizing on the opportunity to identify what needs fixing and how the program can be enhanced – feedback that can be shared with deans or other key administrators

Creating value for advisory board members

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) offers the following ideas for adding value to employers’ participation on college/university advisory boards:

- *Build an advisory board with diverse collective work experience and points of view. Diversity will enhance the quality and range of ideas the board generates while providing a more stimulating, rewarding experience for board members.*
- *Provide board members periodically with information that will be of interest to them outside the context of their advisory board responsibilities – such as, for example, the use of social media in recruiting – and potentially of value to their organizations*
- *Provide opportunities for board members to meet and interact with students whenever board duties bring members to your campus. Activities might include mock interviews, resume critiques, etiquette dinners, student intern or co-op student presentations, etc.*

¹¹ Another regional initiative that has been used to promote internships and co-op is the Northeast Ohio Regional Information Technology Engagement (RITE) Board, which consists of IT executives from some of the region’s biggest corporations and information technology firms, along with representatives of Lorain County Community College, Cleveland State University, Baldwin-Wallace University, Stark State Community College and The University of Akron. The goal of the RITE Board partnership is to increase the number of IT graduates in the region earning credentials and degrees that meet the specific IT talent needs of local employers. That goal will be achieved by enhancing industry feedback to educators, raising awareness of IT careers and promoting best practices in work-based learning.

- Developing a polished, focused employer e-newsletter, giving businesses a thumb-nail sketch of newsworthy data or information coming out of the institution
- Inviting employers to the campus informally, possibly to an arts or sporting event, as a way of saying “thank you” for their support and ongoing relationship
- Creating a “Partners’ Connect” event for participating businesses, the institution’s top administrators, prospective intern and co-op students the employers would be seeking and key faculty in the departments of interest to employers – a reception or lunch that gives all stakeholders high-quality face time
- Encouraging participation in professional organizations for experiential learning at the state level.

Institutional contacts responsible for internship and co-op programs can maximize the impact of their employer outreach efforts by coordinating with other employer outreach activities on their campuses being led by human resources, development, alumni relations and other relevant offices.

Frontline Perspective

Internships and the High-Performing Student: A Business Perspective

Well-run internship programs can create high-quality student experiences and excellent grassroots branding. Many employers cite internship programs as one of the most effective tools they have for hiring new college graduates. On the other hand, a poorly executed internship program can be worse than not having any program at all. Students who feel they were not valued or who did not have a positive experience are likely to warn off their peers on campus.

When considering how to recruit and brand with a high-performing student, collaboration with faculty and the academic program – and the career services office – is critical. Top students are very likely to consider faculty input when making choices, and integration into the curriculum gives an employer the opportunity to set expectations that an internship will be completed early in a student’s academic career.

In the accounting and engineering fields, internships and co-ops are widely accepted by employers as a key recruiting resource and widely viewed by students as a key opportunity to evaluate potential employers. Each party has the opportunity to build and evaluate skills and to determine “fit.” The history of working with faculty and academic programs to find candidates and brand opportunities is long in both of these industries.

— Laura M. Mills-Lewis, EY

Ohio's Business Leaders Speak

"It is the lifeblood of our business to continuously add new great talent to the agency. The intern program gives us a head start in recruiting the next group of leaders for the agency. Mentoring young minds is very gratifying. They are eager and willing to work hard and learn. Seeing them evolve and grow is great to be a part of."

— **Arnold Huffman**, Partner, Rosetta

"Having interns is essential for preparing and executing each baseball season within our business and baseball operations. Interns provide different perspectives and innovative ideas that help impact our organization each year. Our priority is to develop interns into top performers and give them ownership over their work duties in an effort to observe their capabilities as a possible pipeline for future full-time opportunities."

— **Mailynh Vu**, Manager of Recruitment, Cleveland Indians

"Jordan Berley made great contributions during her co-op experience. She developed a procedure to incubate, hatch and nurture insects, which resulted in a repeatable methodology that will increase our production levels and reduce mortalities. She was integral in documenting operational procedures and refining procedures when none were established."

— **Glen Courtwright**, CEO, Enviroflight

"When we got involved with the internship program was about the same time we started experiencing double digit growth rates in sales. That had to do with this internship pipeline. It helped us develop a base of employees with very low turnover. It lowers the risk of hiring a poorly qualified employee. It's like a three-year interview process."

— **Jeremy Jarrett**, Vice President, Kinetic Vision

"Internships are a nice way to inject talent. It's a way to see if people you think would be good employees for the business are a match from a cultural point of view... to a do-they-like-it-here point of view."

— **Scott Hornsby**, Senior Director of Human Resources, Avery Dennison

ASSESSING PERFORMANCE

Why assessment? Effective programs are those that can demonstrate positive results. They can document their value as well as the need for change. So high-quality work-based learning programs take performance assessment seriously to gain insight about how well they are operating, to find out what works and what doesn't, to modify or adapt practices to improve program success and to build capacity by enhancing skills and strengthening accountability.

Assessment involves making judgments – both quantitative and qualitative. It is about objective measurement, but it also requires a healthy dose of intuition and judgment.

Those responsible for the operation of an internship or co-op program often shy away from assessment for a number of reasons – for example, it takes a lot of time, it is hard work and requires tough decisions about the choice of assessment tools, and it demands that goals and learning outcomes be established early to ensure that the program is well-focused and that appropriate data can be collected to measure those outcomes.

Yet, for work-based learning programs, the collection and presentation of assessment results can highlight areas where curriculum changes are called for, where orientation services for students should be improved or where better monitoring of students' work-based learning experiences is needed. These activities also can help program administrators identify targets of opportunity by highlighting places where performance is high, identifying industry sectors where the placement of interns can be expanded, or directing attention onto areas where learning experiences are not meeting the expectations of students or the program's business partners.

This final point reminds us that the assessment of performance really has three components: (1) program assessment, (2) business assessment and (3) student assessment. All three components contribute to the success of internship and cooperative education programs, and all three need to be addressed using appropriate assessment tools.

Program assessment

How effective and efficient is the institution's work-based learning program in placing students in career-readying internships and cooperative education experiences? And how successful is it in connecting students' classroom and job experiences through an aligned curriculum that is grounded in well-defined, workplace-relevant learning outcomes?

The first question is relatively easy to answer, which explains why many programs have relied heavily on tracking the percentage of students who get internships or cooperative education placements. Yet, this single indicator of program performance is far from adequate. What's needed is a variety of feedback mechanisms – not a surprising assertion given that

we are living in a feedback-rich culture. Some colleges and universities have found the following three feedback mechanisms to be productive:

- Using surveys to get feedback from students at the end of their work experiences and, more generally, throughout their years in the work-based program, about how they were prepared for on-the-job learning (orientation sessions), how their classroom curriculum was aligned to their work-based experiences, and how their experiences in both environments were connected to established learning outcomes
- Asking faculty how students are doing with particular focus on their ability to connect what they have learned in the classroom with their development of knowledge and skills in work-based settings
- Requesting feedback from business partners, either by using some of the methods/tactics identified in the previous section of this guide or by soliciting assessments from employees involved in the supervision or hiring of interns or co-op students

Business partner assessment

What value are business partners getting from their participation in the institution's work-based learning program? How do they evaluate the performance of interns placed in their organizations? How do businesses assess their overall engagement in the program's on-campus and job-related activities? And what are their future plans for participating in the program?

Getting feedback from business partners is critically important. It is the best way for an institution to keep the strongest companies in the program and to improve their experiences. It also is an effective way to identify issues that are diminishing students' learning opportunities.

Businesses' evaluation of their participation in work-based learning programs often will not come through questionnaires or email exchanges. Yet, colleges and universities have found a number of other feedback mechanisms to be productive:

- Asking businesses to complete surveys with open-ended questions that allow them to fully express themselves
- Conducting face-to-face conversations with key human resources personnel or others familiar with the business's internship program
- Engaging in informal conversations at receptions or lunches that offer business and campus leaders high-quality face time
- Talking with business leaders at a yearly information exchange meeting
- Seeking business evaluations at every juncture where assistance is provided to the program's business partners, capitalizing on the opportunity to identify what needs fixing and how the program can be enhanced

Student assessment

What are students learning? What value are they getting from their work-based learning experiences? To what extent are they acquiring the expected knowledge, skills and abilities an internship or a series of co-operative education experiences can provide? And how satisfied are they with both the quality of those experiences and the supports provided by the institution's internship or co-op program?¹²

These questions confirm that program assessment is not synonymous with student assessment, even though the feedback mechanisms used for both may be same. Following are feedback mechanisms that some colleges and universities have found to be productive:

- Asking students to complete an assessment at the end of each work-based learning experience with questions about what they did, how they were supervised, what knowledge and skills they acquired, how the work related to what they learned in the classroom and how satisfied they were with the experience
- Conducting face-to-face or online exit interviews (or reflective meetings) for all internship or co-op students before graduation, which gives institutions critical information about on-campus and on-the-job learning experiences – and about what students are doing next (e.g., employment), how those jobs are related to their college education and what their starting salaries are going to be
- Sending a student evaluation form to every student's immediate work site supervisor, emphasizing that students need and want feedback to make the work experience truly valuable
- Encouraging businesses to give their work-based learning students regular, constructive feedback including written evaluations at the end of their work experiences
- Working with businesses to give interns constructive feedback on problematic topics such as issues related to dress, personal appearance and professionalism

Institutions should anticipate that some businesses will resist efforts to generate written evaluations. In some cases, businesses' legal counsel will advise against sharing evaluations for potential liability reasons. In other instances, the issue may be nothing more than a matter of time. Therefore, colleges and universities need to make the evaluation process as business friendly as possible – stressing that business feedback is a critical learning tool for the student to grow as a professional.

In other cases, the issue will be a concern about how written evaluations will be used. Here, institutions should make sure that businesses know what is going to happen to their evaluations once they are on campus – and how they will be used both to give students valuable feedback and to guide administrators as they work to improve their programs.

¹² Student assessments should be grounded in educational pedagogy – that is, assessment is not just a satisfaction survey. Instead, assessment is about the depth and breadth of learning that occurs during the work-based learning experience.

Finally, it is critical that institutions link their student assessments to clearly defined **learning outcomes** – to the knowledge, skills and attitudes each student was expected to acquire through an internship or a series of co-operative education experiences.

The Issue of Capacity

Getting feedback on all three levels – program, business partner and student – takes a significant commitment of time, energy and resources. It can be done, but it requires the development of the survey tools needed to gather information. It requires feedback mechanisms that allow the institution to engage stakeholders – and to follow-up again and again when responses are not immediately forthcoming. And it requires data systems that allow staff to analyze the information that has been generated – and to use it to strengthen the institution’s next generation of internship and co-op programs.¹³

13 Some of the rubrics, forms and other tools needed for high-quality performance assessments can be found on the Ohio Board of Regents’ website. See at <https://www.ohiohighered.org/omic>

Frontline Perspective

The Akron Experience: Taking a century-old engineering co-op across campus

A new initiative provides every student with a unique in-and-out-of-the-classroom learning experience to strengthen the connection between campus and community. It’s called The Akron Experience. Using the College of Engineering model of career-ready education throughout the associate and bachelor degree, The University of Akron is implementing co-op and intern-based experiences within all colleges. The mode of relevant learning is being broken into four program types:

- **Alternating Model.** *Students rotate periods between full-time work and full-time school with about equal duration of both. Employment is generally paid. Built around the campus’s century-old engineering program, this plan is the most popular and is found primarily in the baccalaureate-degree institutions.*
- **Parallel Model.** *Students attend classes on a full-time basis during one segment of the day and work part-time during another part of the day, or students attend classes part-time (normally 6-8 hours a week) and work part-time (normally 15-20 hours a week). Employment is generally paid.*
- **Extended-Day Model.** *Students usually attend classes on a part-time basis at night and work part-time or full-time during the day. This model is designed for afternoon and evening classes.*
- **Field Model.** *Students leave campus for work-related assignments at a single time. This employment is usually not paid.*

The Akron Experience offers the potential for integrating students’ academic and career development – and the potential for enhancing student motivation. It expands full-time job placement. And it offers the financial assistance many students need.

– Deanna R. Dunn, The University of Akron

CONCLUSION:

Closing Ohio's Talent Gap

WINNING THE RACE FOR TOMORROW

The fact that nearly two-thirds of the nation’s graduating seniors from the Class of 2013 took part in an internship or a cooperative education program while pursuing a bachelor’s degree confirms the heightened demand for work-integrated education experiences. It’s the demand by students who are looking for a “bridge” that connects their classroom learning with future workplace success. And it’s the demand of businesses seeking skilled, knowledgeable innovators and problem solvers who are anxious to demonstrate not only what they know, but also what they can do with what they know.

For both, the solution is work-based learning. Yet, students and businesses aren’t the only winners. Sustainable internships and co-ops also have the capacity to attract, grow and retain the businesses and workers that will drive Ohio’s economic recovery and development.

Therein lies the value of this guide with its support for colleges and universities that are ready to establish or broaden their work-based learning programs. The information presented here is intended to help institutions ensure that their efforts thrive and that their programs have a lasting impact on the lives of students, the ability of institutions of higher education to serve their communities, the success of the state’s business enterprises and the future vitality of Ohio’s economy.

What can institutions do to ensure that their work-based learning programs stick? Perhaps the simplest way to answer this question is to quickly revisit some of the ideas that are part of this guide. For sustainable internship and co-op programs, colleges and universities should:

- Set a clear work-based learning vision that those who have a stake in the enterprise see as both desirable and achievable
- Secure top-level support for work-based learning, starting with the visible leadership with the Board of Trustees and president, and build a “guiding coalition” that includes leading faculty, business and community leaders, and students.
- Create the structures and systems needed to support students’ overall academic progress, as well as their advancement in a student-centered, business-friendly, work-based learning program
- Establish short- and long-term goals – and identify strategies and tactics to reach them
- Address core curriculum issues and define anticipated learning outcomes, ensuring that work-based learning is fully integrated into students’ academic programs
- Build a career services/student advising system that helps students develop, evaluate and/or carry out education, career and employment decisions – and that gets students ready for the unfamiliar terrain of a professional workplace
- Ensure sufficient flexibility in program design and operation to meet the needs of both traditional and nontraditional students

- Spell out a business engagement strategy that leads to sustainable partnerships through which private-sector organizations become involved in the design and implementation of the work-based learning program
- Develop reliable assessment tools that can be used to document the value of the program as well as the need for change – and that also can be utilized to assess the performance of students and business partners

Finally, the strongest case for sustainable internships and co-op programs is rooted in an understanding of the keys to Ohio's future economic prosperity. First, innovation – the capacity to generate and apply new ideas to the creation and upgrading of products, processes and services – is a major ingredient of long-term economic growth. And second, talent – the development of technology-savvy workers with a strong work ethic and advanced synthesizing, reasoning, collaboration, communication and problem-solving skills – is a core driver of competitiveness in the 21st century economy.

The essential products of internships and co-ops are innovation and talent. Work-based learning experiences close the gap between the knowledge and skills students acquire in the classroom and the competencies needed to innovate, solve business and community problems and compete on a global stage. For Ohio, closing this gap is a matter of economic survival.

WORK-BASED LEARNING RESOURCES

Colleges and universities interested in establishing or expanding internship or cooperative education programs will find the following resources most helpful:

University System of Ohio

<https://www.OhioHigherEd.org>

Ohio Means Internships & Co-ops

<http://www.OhioMeansInternships.com>

Ohio Cooperative Education Association (OCEA)

<http://www.ohioco-op.com>

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)

<http://www.naceweb.org>

National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE)

<http://www.nsee.org>

Cooperative Education and Internship Association (CEIA)

<http://www.ceiainc.org>

Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education (NOCHE)

<http://www.noche.org>

Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education (SOCHE)

<http://www.socheintern.org>

In addition, some of the rubrics, forms and other tools needed for high-quality, work-based learning programs – and for the performance assessments that are important components of those programs – can be found at <https://www.ohiohighered.org/omic>.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ohio Board of Regents would like to thank the subject matter experts who provided support and guidance throughout the preparation of this document:

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Laura M. Mills, Faculty Relations Lead, EY

Marvin J. (Marv) Roth, Career Consultant, M.J. Roth Consulting

Several Ohio Board of Regents staff also provided input and professional support, including the following:

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Joel Husenits, Creative Director

John Magill, Assistant Deputy Chancellor, Economic Advancement

Jeff Robinson, Director of Communications

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Brett Visger, Associate Vice Chancellor, Institutional Collaboration & Completion

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