FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY IS 2014-2015 THE “YEAR OF THE INTERNSHIP” AT OBERLIN COLLEGE?
- The Career Center was recently awarded a large grant from Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation (the “Career Ready” Grant) to develop and support quality, unpaid internships. ($149,938)
- On the occasion of their 50th Reunion, the Class of 1965 established the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Internship (MLK) Fund to support high-quality internships. ($250,000/over five years)
- Previous to receipt of the Career Ready grant and Class of 1965 gift, funds supporting unpaid interns at Oberlin ranged from $10,000-$25,000 per year; 2015 presents a remarkable opportunity to support more Oberlin students in their pre-professional exploration.
- With a slowly recovering hiring environment and heightened competition among candidates, quality internships have never been more important for undergraduates. For students from moderate- or low-income families, a paid opportunity opens doors otherwise closed and provides additional incentive to focus on their academic and intellectual pursuits.

WHY ARE WE ASKING OBERLIN ALUMNI LEADERS TO HELP?
- We believe Oberlin alumni are those most likely and able to identify high-quality internships, through their current or previous organizations served, their professional and Oberlin networks, and through the non-profit organizations they serve as volunteers and/or board members.
- They best understand the range of fields, disciplines, and professions Oberlin students will be drawn to and thrive in.

WHAT DO OBERLIN COLLEGE INTERNS OFFER AN ORGANIZATION?
- Strong intellectual, academic, analytical and interpersonal skills; they learn quickly; they adapt well; they prove themselves through respect for others and hard work.
- When challenged and well mentored, they will yield strong and creative results.

WHY WILL OBERLIN INTERNS FUNDED THROUGH THE GRANT BE PAID BY THE COLLEGE?
- Our funders require that the College disburse all stipends and wages.
- Convenience for sponsoring organizations – with Oberlin as fiduciary agent, sponsoring organizations may focus on work product and learning outcomes, not payroll or federal employment barriers

WHAT INTERNSHIPS ARE ELIGIBLE?
- “Career Ready” internships are those in the United States only; MLK internships are domestic or global.
- Both funds support summer internships only, eight to ten weeks in length, 40 hours per week.
- Oberlin provides and requires a learning agreement form to be completed by the supervisor and intern.
- Only off-campus internships are funded.
- The Class of 1965 MLK Internship Fund interprets career-enhancing internships more broadly (e.g., Summer Music Festivals, academic research opportunities away from Oberlin).

WHICH OBERLIN STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE AND WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF COMPENSATION?
- Our newest grant funds and philanthropic gifts supporting summer interns are need-based; the “Career Ready” grants are available to Oberlin students of high- and moderate-need; Class of 1965 MLK Internships support high-need students only. Oberlin also stewards a few smaller and longer-standing internship stipend funds, some of which are available irrespective of an Oberlin student’s financial need.
- Every applicant’s eligibility (level of need) is determined by the Oberlin College Office of Financial Aid under confidential review, which follows College and federal eligibility criteria.
• Internships under the “Career Ready” grant will be awarded for Summer 2015 and are available to rising juniors and rising seniors only; other funds do not carry this stipulation.

• Under the Career Ready grant, interns are compensated $4,000 for the summer (eight to ten weeks; 40 hrs./wk.)

• Under the Class of 1965 MLK Internship Fund, each intern will receive a stipend of $5,000.

WHAT DOES “HIGH QUALITY” REALLY MEAN?
• Essential indicators of high-quality internships include pre-planned orientation/training, supervision, evaluation, the sponsoring organization’s acknowledgment of value, and a substantially challenging project or set of responsibilities. The Oberlin Career Center staff enjoys opportunities to consult with sponsoring organizations on ensuring quality experiences on both sides (i.e., interns challenged by the work, organization work product accomplished).

• For specific ideas, refer to the document included here and titled, “Great Interns, Great Internships.”

WHAT ARE EXPECTATIONS FOR LENGTH OF TIME AND HOURS PER WEEK?
• With Oberlin’s academic calendar, internships begin after Memorial Day and conclude before Labor Day.

• The Career Ready internships should last eight to ten weeks.

• The Career Ready grant requires wage-based compensation, hours are calculated bi-weekly on time sheets that document 40 hours work per week.

IS ACADEMIC CREDIT AWARDED FOR SUMMER INTERNSHIPS?
• Oberlin College interns may not receive both credit and financial compensation.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE EVENT THERE IS A PERFORMANCE ISSUE?
• Oberlin’s Career Center will actively partner with internship sponsors and supervisors in addressing intern performance issues; such issues are rare among Oberlin interns.

• Oberlin requests that employers/sponsors advise the College of these issues as early as possible.

WHERE DOES OBERLIN STAND ON LIABILITY IN INTERNSHIPS?
• Internship sites are considered ‘extensions of the classroom’ by our insurance carrier and because these will be College-funded internships, Oberlin students, faculty and staff are covered by our policy.

• Oberlin College can provide evidence of coverage with a certificate of insurance.

HOW DOES AN INTERESTED ORGANIZATION GET STARTED?
• Posting begins with a position description accompanied by the attached Internship Proposal form.

• A dialogue about internships may begin with a conversation with either Richard Berman (rberman@oberlin.edu) or Donna Russell (drussell@oberlin.edu), the lead contacts for internships.

BY WHAT DATES DO ALUMNI NEED TO IDENTIFY INTERNSHIPS TO THE CAREER CENTER?
• When referring opportunities to the Career Center that will require Oberlin staff to facilitate a sponsoring organization’s commitment to and/or development of an internship, alumni proposing internships must contact Donna Russell at the Career Center no later than December 1, 2014.

• If little or no cultivation is needed, and an organization is ready to post an internship, the deadline date for identifying it to the Career Center is considerably later – February 2, 2015.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW AS A PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEER ON THIS INITIATIVE?
• It is possible that we may receive more internship offers than we are able to fund. When you are speaking with potential sponsors, therefore, it’s important to be clear that funding may be available, but is not guaranteed for any particular internship.
All internships, indeed all field-based pre-professional experiences, involve some proportion of observation and participation. Internships with more of one than the other can be great with balances on either side – as long as each is focused and intentional.

Great internships are thought out and planned in advance. Weaker internships find supervisors on their morning commutes asking themselves, “What can I give my intern to do today?” The latter happens too often, despite most supervisors having good intentions. Internships often become back-burner considerations to higher-impact priorities in the immediate supervisors’ jobs.

Great internships include some kind of serious learning agreement to which interns and supervisors both commit. Such agreements include goals and ways to measure results. They also include regular intervals to re-assess the intern’s progress.

What great interns do:
- Great interns use their peripheral vision to spot subsidiary learning opportunities, and they are assertive in asking to be part of opportunities outside their immediate responsibilities.
- Great interns identify and propose projects if/when they become under-challenged.
- Great interns aren’t afraid to ask questions and reach out for help when they need it.

What great supervisors do:
- Great supervisors assign their interns short term projects that carry firm deadline dates along with one long-term project that interns can re-focus on when they’re in between the shorter ones.
- Great supervisors create action plans for orientation, training, supervision, coaching/mentoring, and evaluation/performance reviews.
- Great supervisors are intentional about integrating interns with other professionals.
- Great supervisors look for unconventional opportunities for intern engagement, such as including them in staff meetings or having them attend a local conference, or sitting in on webinars.
- Great supervisors provide interns access to other professionals in a field. Example – connect interns for one or two days for a “shadow” experience with a colleague in a smaller/larger organization and/or one that works in a different area of practice.

Types of internships:
- Rotational - sequence of short-term assignments to different departments, divisions, or areas of practice.
- Project-based - some of the best internships are found in the back of supervisors’ desk drawers – those projects the supervisor always wanted to do but could never prioritize.
- Partner- or team-oriented - there can be “excellence in numbers” – assigning a pair or team of interns to a shared project can profoundly expand the experience for all; when interns work together on shared projects or toward shared goals, they often self-supervise very effectively and may compound results.

Richard T. Berman
Oberlin College, Oberlin Ohio (USA)
November 25, 2013
To propose an internship and to create an informative internship description for Oberlin College Career Center’s online recruitment system, ObieOpps, we request that prospective sponsors of interns complete this form. Should organizations proposing internships have an internship position description of their own design, please submit a copy along with this completed form. Contact Donna Russell at internships@oberlin.edu or (440) 775-8140 if you have questions.

An online version of this form is available on the Oberlin Career Center website, at www.oberlin.edu/career/alumni/fundedinternships.html.

Company/Organization Name: __________________________________________

Company/Organization Address: _______________________________________

Company/Organization Website: _______________________________________

Company/Organization Overview: _______________________________________

Internship Contact

Name: __________________________________________

Phone: _______________________________________

Email: _______________________________________

Internship Title: __________________________________________

Internship Overview: __________________________________________

Key Responsibilities: __________________________________________

Internship Supervisor’s Name (if different from Internship Contact above): __________________________________________

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