

Student Internships: Resources for NAHB Members

Slattery Consulting

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Introduction

The U.S. housing industry suffers from a chronic shortage of directly employed labor and subcontractors. While the shortage varies somewhat by trade, by region, and from year to year, over the long term demand outstrips supply.

Community College

The U.S. community college system consists of more than 1,100 public and private institutions. Community colleges may grant students an associate degree as a stand-alone credential or a steppingstone to a baccalaureate

Work-Based Student Learning

At both the secondary and postsecondary levels, schools often encourage students to explore a variety of career opportunities and gain work experience while they are students. This work experience may be extra curricular or may be during school time and earn credits that meet graduation requirements.

At the high school level and to some extent at the college level as well, students may be led through a progression of experiences that help them identify their career interests and abilities. These experiences may include career exploration, career mentoring, service learning, and internship-operative experience. Home builders, as potential employers, may interact with students in each of these experiences. For the protection of minors, it is not uncommon for high schools to require a background check on potential employers or volunteers working with students under age 18.

Career Exploration

Early exposure to a variety of career opportunities may help high school students (typically 14-15 years old) find an area of interest to pursue further. A home builder might be involved in career exploration activities by:

- ‡ hosting field trips to job sites
- ‡ providing guest speakers for a student club, class, or general student assembly
- ‡ welcoming students on short-term (unpaid) job shadowing
- ‡ participating in career fairs at the school
- ‡ participating in competitions or demonstrations of construction skills, including national events such as [SkillsUSA](#) and [NAHB Student Competitions](#) or local events such as the [Build Showcase](#) in Kansas City.

Mentoring

Home builders may interact with high school or college students, particularly those from underrepresented groups, by acting as career mentors. Assistance on becoming a good mentor is available through organizations such as [ACE Mentors](#), but a home builder may also work through the local [HBA Brothers Big Sisters of America](#) or simply as an individual mentoring relationship for a home builder. A mentoring relationship might involve

- ‡ holding regular face-to-face or virtual meetings between the mentor and protégé
- ‡ allowing student job shadowing
- ‡ introducing the student to industry professionals at the jobsite or at industry meetings
- ‡ recommending or referring the student to industry professionals
- ‡ helping students understand the expected work ethic, academic knowledge, technical skills, professional ethics, career opportunities and rewards of a career in the home building industry.

Service Learning

Home builders may provide opportunities for high school or college students to complete construction-related community service projects that meet individual course requirements, or that are extracurricular projects for student organizations or clubs. Taking part in

The Internship Experience

Preparing for an Internship Program

Student interns from high school, community college or four

Example training plan activities for high school students might include:

- ‡ Use math to perform quantity takeoff of items, lengths, areas and volumes.
- ‡ Read construction drawings, identify wood and metal framing components, perform quantity takeoff.
- ‡ Participate in building layout, including location of lines and corners, squaring the building corners, identifying benchmarks and elevations, and identifying tools, equipment and safety procedures.
- ‡ Participate in building formwork for concrete flatwork, including

Finding and Hiring Interns

The distribution of CTE programs in the U.S. is geographically uneven. Some states have a greater emphasis on career and technical education at the high school level, and construction programs at the two-year or four-year college level are limited in number. The home builder looking for a student intern to work part-time during the school year may be limited to students from local schools or colleges, while summer (usually college students) may be drawn from a wider geographic area. The decision on which avenue is best may be based on initial research that may be required to become familiar with local schools that offer a construction-related program.

Career and technical high schools are employment-focused and will typically have a placement office to act as the bridge between potential employers and students. The high school guidance office may also be an appropriate point of contact for employers. At the college and university level, employers may contact the placement (or career) office.

At both the high school and college level, it is typical in construction for employers to directly contact the faculty or administrator in the construction program to find interns, arrange interviews, or participate in career fairs. Construction faculty typically have construction experience themselves and are proactive in interacting with companies interested in employing their students. Employers also meet prospective student interns by working with student organizations in construction programs such as the NAB Student Chapter, providing speakers for student chapter meetings, hosting field trips to job sites, or sponsoring student teams in construction competitions. The construction faculty is also instrumental in facilitating these types of interactions.

At both the high school and college/university level, potential employers may become involved with the construction department by joining the industry advisory board, or IAB. An IAB informs the academic institution and specific academic program on industry trends and needs of construction employers. They may assist in reviewing textbooks and course content during accreditation reviews. The IAB members often provide support for construction students, faculty and academic programs by donating expertise, building materials,

Companies interested in hiring students may also participate in career fairs sponsored by the school. The trend for colleges has been moving career fairs to fall for companies hiring spring semester graduates. Some schools host career fairs in both the fall and the spring, and employers are advised to start early to have access to the best students. Career fairs are often coordinated through a career/placement office, but the construction faculty is a good contact for getting information on upcoming career events.

If no local schools offer construction programs, employers should not overlook students in accounting, marketing, computing, interior design, or architecture and introduce them to the home building industry through these allied fields.

Managing Interns

Because the internship is viewed as a capstone experience for students who have nearly completed their academic education, the employer of interns has a responsibility to provide meaningful activities that allow the student intern to learn. At both the high school and college level, internships are considered capstone

