

# 2014-2015 Career Ready Internship Grant

Closing Report and Best Practices

April, 2016



## A MATTER OF EQUITY: THE CASE FOR PAID INTERNSHIPS

At Great Lakes, we're focused on helping low-income students, first-generation students and students of color get to and through college. We know these students have the most to gain from higher education, yet often face the biggest challenges completing their degrees.

We also understand that to realize the true value of those degrees, graduates need to put them to work. Our Career Ready Internship grants were created to not only help give students experience in their field of study, but also to improve their employment prospects after graduation.

A meaningful internship experience provides college students with relevant workplace skills and networking opportunities that can put career goals in reach.

There's no doubting their value: according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 65 percent of students who take part in paid internships are offered full-time jobs—almost double the number of those with no internship experience.

But not all internships are paid, and students struggling to pay for college often can't afford to work without a paycheck. Consequently, when these students go on to enter the job market, they find themselves a step behind candidates with internships on their resumé's.

We've found a proven solution to address this equity gap: funding paid internships for students with financial need, to put them on equal footing with their wealthier peers.

**“ Paid internships benefit students, colleges and employers. Students gain meaningful workplace skills and are more likely to earn degrees and use their internship experiences to help secure good jobs upon graduation. Colleges will see increased graduation and job placement rates, and employers gain a pipeline to fresh talent. It's a win-win-win.”**

Richard D. George, President & Chief Executive Officer, Great Lakes

# How We Set Out to **Level the Playing Field for All Students.**

Following a small scale pilot in 2013, we expanded our Career Ready Internship grant program in 2014 with a one-year, \$5.2 million commitment and a goal of creating 2,200 internships for low-income students at 40 colleges in Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

We established these goals for our partner colleges:

- Focus on creating new internships rather than “converting” existing unpaid positions to paid opportunities
- Make new connections with area businesses
- Offer these internships solely to juniors and seniors with demonstrated financial need
- Match internships to students’ fields of study

We set out to learn more about the potential internship programs hold, including 1) do internships keep students on track to graduation, and 2) what are the best practices for the successful administration of an internship program.

Our partner colleges really dug in and went to work for their students—making contacts, securing new positions and providing us with valuable feedback on the design, launch and management of meaningful internship programs.

## We learned that **students see the value of internships.**

The comments we received from students were very clear on the benefits they took away from this “real world” opportunity:

“ My internship gave me skills I know employers are looking for and experiences that I can draw from when I interview.”

Hamline University Intern Cindy Chooraman

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“ My internship was an amazing experience and I was able to do it without being stressed financially.”

Viterbo University Intern Caley Griswold

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“ I learned more at my internship than I could in any classroom because I was truly putting into practice what I was learning.”

Loras College Intern Chelsea McCarraher

## And, internship opportunities **keep students on track.**

**Just as encouraging:** colleges report that 97% of the students who worked at internships during this program either re-enrolled or went on to graduate. Gaining on-the-job experience and seeing the possibilities that lie ahead undoubtedly inspires them to continue on to graduation.

## We learned colleges and businesses **are ready to work together.**

Partner colleges connected with over 1,800 unique organizations—including businesses, nonprofits and government agencies. Colleges made a significant effort in creating new internships with this grant—rather than simply converting previously unpaid internships to paid positions. Three-quarters of the internships filled were new positions.

Businesses saw value in the program as well. They gained access to a pool of talented candidates not just for internships, but also for full-time recruitment needs in the future.

**“ We’re excited to build new partnerships with Minnesota businesses and nonprofits to provide the kind of internships organizations want and that students need. We know that Auggies are ready to apply and practice what they are learning in the classroom. And, with a student body that is more than 35 percent students of color, we can help businesses continue the important work of diversifying their workforce.”**

Keith Munson, Director, Clair and Gladys Strommen Center for Meaningful Work, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN

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**“ Without funding for paid internships, small nonprofits like ours could not afford to train and educate future workers in the nonprofit field.”**

Jill Van Calster, President, Wisconsin Philanthropy Network, Milwaukee, WI

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**“ We will continue seeking John Carroll University interns in the future. They are diligent, hardworking, and able to easily adapt to our fast-paced office.”**

John Carroll University Business Partner, Cleveland, OH

# We learned **what it takes to successfully administer an internship program.**

For colleges looking to create a new internship program—or improve an existing one—here are the Best Practices shared by our schools.

## Best practices for colleges

- **Have Career Services manage the program.** Placing interns is a lot like placing graduates. From recruiting student candidates to satisfying employers' needs, Career Services has the expertise and contact networks already in place and can easily apply them to an internship program.
- **Spend a semester preparing.** It takes a lot of work creating an internship program. We recommend allocating a semester for planning and preparation—including contacting businesses, arranging positions, interviewing candidates and coordinating logistics.
- **Collaborate across campus.** Keep the lines of communication open between all departments involved—Career Services, Financial Aid, Payroll, Academic Affairs, Advancement, etc. This can help overcome institutional “roadblocks” that may slow down the entire process. To promote better interdepartmental communication, we suggest creating an advisory group—made up of colleagues from each area—to meet regularly during the year.

## Best practices working with business partners

- **Know what employers are looking for.** Sell them on the academic programs that match their needs. Then present candidates that fit the job requirements. The easier it is for businesses to fill positions, the more they'll want to continue participating.
- **Be tactical with your business partners.** Track your contacts with each business. Know how many and what type of positions have been secured. Follow up on interviews and successful matches. Stay in close touch to ensure placement goals are met.
- **Run the payroll process on campus.** When colleges handle payroll it lightens the load for business partners—making them more likely to continue participation in the future—while also helping colleges better manage their program dollars.
- **Make sure wages are competitive.** In order for internships to be as attractive as possible to low-income students, wages need to be in line with local, competitive hourly rates. Don't force students to choose between a higher-paying—but not career-oriented—job and the opportunity to learn in their field of study at an internship.

## Best practices working with students

- **Offer them the right number of hours.** When internships are too short they're nothing more than job shadowing. Too long, and coursework can suffer. Partner colleges report around 170 hours over a semester (about 15 hours per week) is the "sweet spot," balancing a quality internship experience with the student's academic workload.
- **Be flexible in scheduling.** There may be times when internships conflict with the part-time jobs students already work—and will still need after their internships end. A little help with scheduling can enable them to do both. Try to fit internships around existing job schedules or even stretch the internships over longer time periods with fewer hours per week, but still enough in total to give a worthwhile experience.
- **Prep them for success.** Students need to understand an internship interview is the same as interviewing for a "real" job. They'll need a strong resumé and interviewing techniques. Helping them develop both has benefits now, and after graduation.
- **Cover their cost of commuting.** Students have to go where the internships are. Help them offset any additional transportation expense by raising the hourly wage, providing gas cards, bus/subway passes, etc.

## Finally, we learned that **internship grants are worth continuing.**

Our success with this grant encouraged us to commit \$12.2 million to fund the 2015-2018 Career Ready Internship program at 33 colleges and universities. Our partner colleges are now creating 7,000 internships, plus they're also looking to secure their own funding to sustain the program after the 2017-2018 academic year.

We are also working with MDRC, a leading social and education policy research organization, to conduct a multifaceted evaluation of the data collected by our partner colleges. The study will cover a number of topics, including student retention and persistence, college-employer relationships, program implementation and scalability, and sustainability. Look for periodic reports during the grant period and a full report after the program concludes.

# Acknowledgements

We thank the 40 colleges we worked with for all their dedication in making paid internships a reality for the low-income students we serve. Their efforts, both on campus and in their business communities, helped make the program a success—putting nearly 2,400 at-risk students on track to not only graduate, but enter the job market with the advantage of having meaningful work experience already on their resumé.

**Alverno College**  
Milwaukee, WI

**Ashland University**  
Ashland, OH

**Augsburg College**  
Minneapolis, MN

**Beloit College**  
Beloit, WI

**Bethel University**  
St. Paul, MN

**Cardinal Stritch University**  
Milwaukee, WI

**Carroll University**  
Waukesha, WI

**Carthage College**  
Kenosha, WI

**Clarke University**  
Dubuque, IA

**Cleveland State University**  
Cleveland, OH

**College of Saint Scholastica**  
Duluth, MN

**College of St. Benedict**  
St. Joseph, MN

**Hamline University**  
St. Paul, MN

**Hiram College**  
Hiram, OH

**John Carroll University**  
Cleveland, OH

**Kent State University-Stark Campus**  
Canton, OH

**Lawrence University**  
Appleton, WI

**Loras College**  
Dubuque, IA

**Macalester College**  
St. Paul, MN

**Metropolitan State University**  
St. Paul, MN

**Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design**  
Milwaukee, WI

**Northland College**  
Ashland, WI

**Oberlin College**  
Oberlin, OH

**Ohio Wesleyan University**  
Delaware, OH

**Ripon College**  
Ripon, WI

**Silver Lake College**  
Manitowoc, WI

**Simpson College**  
Indianola, IA

**St. Catherine University**  
St. Paul, MN

**University of Findlay**  
Findlay, OH

**University of Minnesota-Twin Cities**  
Minneapolis, MN

**University of Northwestern-St. Paul**  
St. Paul, MN

**University of Wisconsin-Green Bay**  
Green Bay, WI

**University of Wisconsin-Madison**  
Madison, WI

**University of Wisconsin-Parkside**  
Kenosha, WI

**University of Wisconsin-River Falls**  
River Falls, WI

**University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point**  
Stevens Point, WI

**University of Wisconsin-Superior**  
Superior, WI

**University of Wisconsin-Whitewater**  
Whitewater, WI

**Viterbo University**  
La Crosse, WI

**Youngstown State University**  
Youngstown, OH



## About Great Lakes: **Dedicated to making college education a reality since 1967.**

Knowing that education has the power to change lives for the better, Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation & Affiliates was established as a nonprofit group focused on a single objective: helping students nationwide prepare for and succeed in postsecondary education and student loan repayment. As a leading student loan guarantor and servicer, we have been selected by the U.S. Department of Education to provide assistance and repayment planning to more than 8 million borrowers—as well as assistance to colleges and lenders nationwide. Our group's earnings support one of the largest and most respected educational philanthropy programs in the country. Since 2006, we have committed over \$160 million in grant funding to promote higher education access and completion for students of color, low-income students, and first-generation students.

To learn more about Great Lakes Education Philanthropy contact  
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