

Internships: Enhancing Your Facilities Network

By Kristie Toohill



Internships in higher education are gaining in popularity. In support of making educational facilities a profession of choice, APPA encourages members to establish a facilities-related internship program and to make internships available for students seeking real-world experience. Both students and institutions recognize the potential value of internships as a significant part of preparation for careers and future leadership in facilities management. APPA and its community have been focused on growing our profession and ensuring that the next generation has a good foundation in facilities. In the current job market, employers are not only looking for workers with the right educational background, but for those with practical work experience in which they have demonstrated their abilities.

STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The APPA Student Internship Program offers a wide range of opportunities for students to enhance their personal and professional growth. Many individual institutions excel at offering internships to students through the facilities management department, but these internships are all different and are not necessarily connected to APPA. By developing a more formalized internship program, we can ensure that in addition to providing experience in specific

operational projects and tasks, students can find some consistency in the practical experience they gain, an awareness of the opportunities available in educational facilities, and an early connection to APPA.

The program is open for students at all levels and recent graduates in multiple disciplines. The typical fields in educational facilities may include facilities management, project management, construction management, safety, energy/sustainability, information technology, business administration, and training and development, among others. All APPA member institutions are encouraged to participate. Each host institution determines its own internship structure, including internship type (academic or nonacademic), duration, and scheduling. In addition to the internship structure, the host institution also determines funding for positions and/or other benefits, if available.

There are volunteer universities participating in a pilot program this summer. The feedback from this program will be utilized to improve and finalize the program before rolling it out to all APPA members. In the near future, the APPA website will include a newly designed webpage for the APPA student internships. Job postings, communications, resources, and more will be available for students and host institutions.

TASK FORCE

The APPA Student Internship Task Force reports to the Vice President for Information and Research and is supported by the APPA Board of Directors. To date, the task force has researched existing internship programs and best practices, developed program criteria, identified procedures and guidelines, developed the application process, and designed a

specific webpage. The task force meets monthly via conference calls and will continue to finalize the next steps for the program, such as creating a network of supporters, identifying strategies to connect to students and academic programs, building communication methods, creating a marketing plan, and so much more!

Sincere thanks to all the volunteers who have devoted time to develop this new APPA program:

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PROGRAM GOALS



BENEFITS OF APPA STUDENT INTERNSHIP

Benefits to Institutions:

- Bring new ideas to institution
- Learn new perspectives
- Enhance relationships with college and community
- Mentor potential future employees

Benefits to APPA Organization:

- Promote educational facilities
- Expand partnership with institutions
- Enhance facilities networking
- Connect with new generations

Benefits to Students:

- Learn new skills through professional experience
- Gain experience in facilities management settings
- Build networking in their chosen career field
- Free access to resources and services

PROGRAM ROLES

APPA

- Provide internship website—(will be included on the APPA Job Express page)
- Review and publish internship positions on APPA Job Express
- Continue to assist in developing the internship program


Host

- Submit internship position(s) on APPA Job Express
- Responsible for all communication with applicants
- Inform APPA of chosen candidate(s)
- Complete and submit required documents to APPA

Intern

- Apply for free APPA student membership
- Apply for position(s) posted on APPA Job Express
- Responsible for all communications with employers related to individual postings
- Utilize APPA website and social media to get connected with the facilities network
- Complete and submit required documents to supervisor and/or APPA

GET INVOLVED

It's FREE to join the APPA Student Internship Pilot Program. If you are interested in joining, feel free to contact Steve Glazner at steve@appa.org or Anita Dosik at appainternship@appa.org. 

Kristie Toohill (formerly Kowall) is associate director of facilities management at Illinois State University in Normal, IL. She serves as the APPA Student Internship Task Force Chair and is a member of the Information and Research Committee. She can be reached at klender@ilstu.edu. Tanaporn "Gig" Supanichrattana is a project coordinator at Illinois State University and can be reached at tsupani@ilstu.edu. Mac Gao is also a project coordinator at Illinois State University and can be reached at thmago@ilstu.edu. Gig and Mac assisted on this article and are members of the APPA Student Internship Task Force; this is their first article for *Facilities Manager*.