

Virtual Internship/Externship Documentation

Methodology:

Requirements

- Course with a project in the discipline
- Faculty member who is interested in delivering a virtual internship/externship
- Business leader interested in being a mentor for a team of students to solve a real world problem
- Access to an online webinar software system
- Dedication and flexibility from all involved

Faculty Member

- Needs to be one who is flexible and willing to let a business person lead the project
- Needs to be willing to learn from the business person
- Needs ideally to be willing to set up the webinars, record them, and act as a facilitator with the student teams and the business person
- Needs to be willing to help locate and establish a relationship with the lead business person
- Needs to be willing to help locate and arrange for 4-5 additional business people to review and evaluate the final student presentation

Virtual Business Lead

- Needs to be flexible
- Needs to be willing to dedicate 4-5 hour sessions to a virtual webinar throughout the semester or quarter, working with students AND needs to be willing to answer emails from the students in between webinars
- Needs to provide the project and/or vet the project at least
- Needs to help review and evaluate the final student presentation
- Needs to help locate other business people to help with the final evaluation session

Students

- Need to be willing to take what they have learned to date and work as a team to solve the “real-world” business problem
- Need to create a presentation explaining the solution
- Ideally need to create the actual solution in a lab environment (may or may not be feasible)
- Need to present the solution as a team to the business reviewers either virtually or face to face, depending on availability of the business reviewers]

The Business Evaluators

- Need to understand what courses the student team members have taken so that they have context regarding what the team members should know for background
- Need to actively listen to the team presentations
- Need to ask probing questions, not trying to stump them but rather trying to help them
- Need to review the lab solution if created, asking questions about this solution as well
- Need to fill out the rubric form to evaluate the students

Collin's Experience:

Collin piloted 3 employer-led virtual internship/externship capstone projects in Spring 2013 across 3 disciplines, but the Networking project was most successful and is therefore documented as a role model. Two other successful virtual I/E classes have been completed to date.

Virtual internship/externship benefits

- Job market remains competitive and unpredictable for graduates
- On-site Internship not always a feasible option as community college students who often work full time to put themselves through school and provide for their families
- Provides students the opportunity to work directly with a business mentor in a quasi-internship capacity
- Helps provide competitive edge for students because students can add write-up to their portfolios
- Mimics working virtually with teams, which students will likely experience once they enter the industry
- Student earns potential business leader reference and job search assistance/support

Networking Virtual Internship/Externship Pilot Implementation

- Entire virtual internship course for spring 2013 was dedicated to the project
- Vice president of IT Infrastructure at a multi-state bank served as business industry partner & mentor
- Faculty leadership provided by a lead Collin professor of IT
- Students tasked with designing IT systems and security for five urgent care clinics and tying them together to increase efficiency
- Students had to design a multi-site network, work within a budget, work as a team, and present their findings to a panel of business leaders
- The students and the business leader interfaced using a webinar tool five times throughout the semester for a little more than 1 hour (discussed the project and developments the students had made towards the project)
- Between interfaces the students also communicated with the business leader via email
- The pilot culminated with the final presentation to a panel of business leaders, faculty, and IT experts
- IT experts scored the students using a rubric developed by the IT professor

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Recommendations

- Smaller classes, perhaps 10 -12 students
- Business leaders and faculty that embrace the value of students solving real work problems
- Business leaders and faculty who value the importance of virtual projects
- Provide student projects which are not clearly defined (encouraging students to understand the importance of asking questions)

Lessons learned

- Prepare business leaders involved with the final student project presentations regarding the level of effort provided and prior courses taken by the students prior to the presentation