

Connecting the Dots

Supporting High School Interns on Their Journey to College and Career Success

One of the most valuable outcomes of an internship are professional relationships that students can build on for future networking and career guidance. The ability to [build social capital](#) should be seen as fundamental to the internship experience you provide high school students. In addition to conversations and collaboration with their mentor and other team members, employers can support interns to take informed next steps in their career journeys by:

Updating professional portfolios

Supervisors/mentors should support interns in building and regularly updating a professional portfolio that reflects the skills and experiences gained during their internship. Supervisors/mentors and their team members can facilitate this through mock interviews and resume statement development to help interns articulate the value of their internship experience. Portfolios may include resumes, LinkedIn profiles, work products/artifacts, and letters of recommendation.

⇒ Read [LinkedIn profile tips for high school students](#)

Sharing career and postsecondary pathways

Throughout the experience, interns should have the opportunity to learn about different career paths within the organization, including hearing from early-career team members who can share their recent experiences job hunting and joining the workforce. It's also crucial for interns to meet with human resources representatives to understand role expectations, qualifications, and any earn-as-you-learn opportunities within the company.

Staying connected after the internship

Connect interns to professional organizations and events to help them foster industry connections. Additionally, assess when interns are ready for potential further employment, such as apprenticeships or entry-level positions, and establish clear communication channels and next steps for this transition, while also involving interns in various professional networking opportunities. Invite interns to meet with the owner, human resources, departmental meetings/lunches, intern volunteering events, etc., to build their professional network.

Consider offering an [exit interview](#) with interns to gather their reflections and feedback on the experience to both intentionally make connections to next steps for the intern and inform adjustments to your program moving forward.

COMMUNITY EXAMPLES

In addition to daily work responsibilities and special projects, [Carus](#) interns participate in several off site visits to expand their knowledge of manufacturing, local history, and the business. Interns are responsible for completing trip reports to summarize each field visit.

Interns are invited to McHenry Community College's monthly Apprenticeship Open Houses to hear about their earn-as-you-learn programs. They are also encouraged to have conversations with the companies they're working for about continuing to work with full-or part-time after the internship.