

Field Mentor Requirements and Responsibilities

Leadership Track

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Being a Field Mentor takes time: investing, leading, providing feedback, correcting, encouraging, challenging, and holding the intern accountable. As with any good investment, the return is significant. An effective internship provides for the intern valuable 'on the job' experience and a chance to discern his or her gifts for effective ministry. It provides for the organization an opportunity to help in the development of future workers.

Field Mentors and host churches or organizations should understand that hosting an intern is not primarily a means of having additional staff to carry on the day to day responsibilities of the work. Instead, it is first and foremost a learning experience in which the mentor should provide oversight, direction, and learning experiences for the intern.

A field mentor invests time and effort in developing the intern. Appreciation is expressed to those who are willing to shoulder this responsibility. Your partnership with Mid-Atlantic Christian University in this effort is greatly appreciated.

MACU Ministry Internship Program Philosophy and Objectives

Jesus had a strategy for developing His followers into individuals who would become leaders in fulfilling His mission. Jesus called them to Himself, taught them, modeled a lifestyle which He wanted them to follow, cared for them, and held them accountable. He also involved them in ministry which was used as a learning experience for them.

The Internship Program has been developed to be an integral part of the student's training for a career. It requires a strong partnership between the University and the Internship Sites to provide meaningful experiences, which include an experienced Field Mentor who can help the student with his or her integration of theology and career goals.

MACU believes that students need an opportunity to experience the work environment, to reflect upon that experience with a mentor, to articulate insights which have been gained, and to plan for the future utilizing the newly learned insights. This learning context will help the student integrate previous learning, formal and informal, which will enhance his or her total educational experience.

Mid-Atlantic Christian University's goal for the internship is to impact the world by transforming ordinary people into extraordinary Christian leaders.

1. The student will develop his or her spiritual life with a recognition that spiritual formation is foundational for any career.
2. The student will develop his or her relational skills with the guidance from a mentor.
3. The student will reflect theologically upon this internship experience.
4. The student will appreciate the importance of personal relationships for providing learning experiences and support.

Building a Mentoring Foundation

Personal Characteristics of an Effective Field Mentor

Interns may drive you crazy. They are often young and excited. They may have quirks. They may have never had anyone lovingly be honest with them about why they act the way they do. Please do not run from that; use this opportunity to shape them. Be reflective; mirror back their weaknesses with love. They may well be in leadership positions within a year. What you say and do for them may help them avoid making severe relational and professional mistakes that could destroy an organization, or their own careers.

If you do not have a healthy self worth of who you are as a leader, please do not bring on an intern. Sometimes students can be idealistic and tactless, and can make you feel threatened. The intern may question what you are doing and why. He/she may appear to want your job and may even be more skilled than you are at some things. The intern may simply be so eager to learn and well-liked by the people he/she works with that a mentor may feel threatened.

Are you okay with you? Are you secure with who you are in your position? Some of the interns have been in leadership positions where they have been in charge and leading others. Some really do have good insights and a lot of experience. The one thing they want more than anything is to be respected and treated like they are part of the team. The intern needs to have an experienced, mature mentor who is confident to help shape them as servant leaders.

All of us bring our own experiences of having been students. Sometimes our experiences haunt what we do with students, suggesting that a student should be totally autonomous, or overly nurtured, or even that a student's mistakes will reflect negatively on our own reputations. It is important that mentors be aware of their own "baggage" and therefore able to monitor when that may be getting in the way of offering the student the best possible learning experience.

Roles of the Effective Field Mentor

The Educational Role

One role for the mentor is that of teacher. In this role, the mentor selects assignments which have the potential for learning and growth. These real life situations allow students to test themselves and risk new ideas and behaviors. Mentors prepare students to take on these assignments by providing necessary information and creating an environment in which students can disclose their concerns, worries, and questions both before the task and after it is completed. Mentors, perhaps most importantly, identify for the students what they will be learning, helping them to

apply their knowledge and values to the work, and to draw general principles from specific learning instances.

The Supportive Role

In this role, the mentor intervenes on behalf of the student by explaining to others the purpose of the internship and to legitimize the student's presence. Mentors may also have occasions to protect the student in their dealings with others. Here, mentors ease the way for the student to do his or her work. It is important, however, that "acting on behalf of the student" be balanced with the educational role. Students can learn much from mistakes and be helped to repair them. Too much protection can result in dependence rather than learning.

The Administrative Role

In this role the mentor holds the student accountable for work. The internship is generally a student's first experience in various roles of service and leadership. Thus, the mentor assists the student in understanding and meeting the demands for timeliness, performance, and accountability. Problems should be discussed openly and become a part of future conversations, and, if they continue, a part of the evaluation as well. Praise and encouragement for a job well done are also valuable. Just as mentors help students to be self-aware and conscious of their actions, mentors must also be very vigilant of what they bring to the teaching-learning experience.

The Intern and the Mentor Relationship

Since this is a new experience for the intern and he/she will be away from personal family and university family, make him/her feel welcome and included in your "family" right away.

General Suggestions and Guidelines

- Do not assume the intern will know what to do, where to go, or how to act right away.
- Provide the intern with the necessary equipment, supplies, information, and specific direction he/she will need to have a successful and valuable mentoring relationship and internship experience.
- Present the intern to the church (or introduce him/her to others in the organization) so that relationships can begin to be built. Include the intern's name on publications. Even though the student is an intern, treating him/her like other staff will help in the transition process.
- Within the first week, sit down with the intern and go over the entire internship plan--re-check or set up due dates, assignments, and observations, or just get calendars coordinated.
- Schedule weekly mentoring meetings with the intern (at least one hour per week).
- Provide the intern with the necessary encouragement and assist with time management.
- Have a "debriefing" session with the intern during the last week of the internship. After this debriefing, the Final Evaluation/Grading Form should be completed and mailed or emailed to the internship director.

Weekly Meetings

The intern and the Field Mentor will meet weekly for approximately one hour in a formal mentoring session. The mentoring session should be utilized to assist the intern in personal and professional growth. Each mentoring session should include:

- reporting a critical work-related incident: The intern may provide a report of one event that had special significance for him/her. The report will include a brief description of the event, but the major focus is upon the intern's reaction to and reflection upon the incident.
- evaluating progress toward a particular goal and discussion of topics established in the learning covenant.

As part of the mission of Mid-Atlantic, the Internship program seeks to assist students in understanding the environment and culture for the world in which they live and work. Cultural differences can be in many areas: ethnic, racial, gender, age, socio-economic, etc. The following outcomes for students have been established in this area and we ask Field Mentors to be especially cognizant of how students are achieving these goals. Discussion of these areas would be of value during the weekly mentoring meetings.

1. Students will be able to use their knowledge of cultural differences to navigate intercultural experiences successfully.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate interest in other cultures through initiating inquiry and interaction.
3. Students will be able to suspend premature judgments when interacting cross-culturally.

The mentor should be aware of the following elements in this mentoring meeting:

- Active listening
- Planning strategies and objectives for the ministry or organization
- Skill training
- Discussion of character issues
- Evaluating conflict situations
- Celebration of "victories" experienced by the intern
- Use of effective questions to draw out personal concerns/needs
- Mutual encouragement for spiritual growth
- Confronting in love in areas needing growth
- Explanation of the "why" of a particular action

Practical Mentoring Ideas

1. Share your life. Investment takes time and patience. Internships are most successful when the Field Mentor truly invests and opens up his/her life to the interns. Give them a "piece of your mind" so they can see HOW and WHY you do your job.

2. Help the intern win and be successful. Protect your intern from situations and other people that might bring more discouragement than what an intern can and should handle.

3. Give the intern opportunities to grow. Some responsibilities are easy to delegate. Others are more difficult because of training. Follow this plan to hand off responsibilities to your intern.

- I do, you watch
- I do, you help
- You do, I help
- You do, I watch
- You do, you and I train someone else

4. Challenge the intern to get out of his/her comfort zones. Stretch the intern. Internships provide an intern with a more realistic view of the job or ministry he/she is planning to pursue. Internships help the interns to decide whether to continue preparing for the occupation choice or to prepare for another job.

5. Provide the intern with honest feedback and constructive criticism. Do so in love. Each intern will be different in how he/she will receive the honesty. Get to know your intern. It will help you to determine the appropriate feedback that your intern desires and needs.

6. Listen to the intern's ideas. Even though interns are often idealistic, they bring a fresh perspective to any church or organization. Your intern may provide you and your organization with many new and fresh ideas. Do not feel threatened by his/her energy and ideas. Feed off the intern's excitement and perspectives. Encourage it. Help the intern balance his/her excitement with realism without dismissing his/her unique ideas.

7. Equip the intern with resources that will help him/her begin well. You could possibly budget for practical resources that will help the intern to become better prepared for the ministry or job he/she will enter. What helps you (and others on your staff) do your job well?

An internship can be an exciting and stimulating endeavor for student, mentor, and the congregation or organization. It is always exciting to see someone learn and grow, and the energy and enthusiasm of students often generates freshness in veterans. Well-trained students often become effective mentors for other students, replenishing our ministers and rejuvenating our congregations and organizations.

This document is subject to change without notice.

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