Volunteers, Interns and Unpaid Internships

The federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provides regulatory guidance for internships and volunteers at public sector organizations such as Texas A&M University. The following information was developed to assist departments on the topics of interns (both paid and unpaid) and volunteers.

Unpaid Interns and Volunteers

Departments should proceed carefully if a student asks to be an unpaid (volunteer) intern. Federal law provides a limited scope for volunteers at Texas A&M, and it is very important that departments follow federal law and System regulation with respect to volunteers and interns.

Here are some key aspects of compliance:

- Employees may not volunteer to do their own jobs nor activities closely related to their own jobs.
- Employees should not volunteer to do jobs nor activities that closely relate to jobs or activities that other employees are being paid for.
- Generally speaking, students may perform voluntary work through student organizations and related activities.
- However, students may not work for Texas A&M as a volunteer, with the exception of unpaid internships which are part of their degree requirements and for which the student will receive course credit. Further details and criteria regarding unpaid internships are:
  1. The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
  2. The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
  3. The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
  4. There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student’s academic coursework.
  5. There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
  6. There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
  7. There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.

In all other circumstances, people may volunteer to work at the University only for civic, humanitarian or charitable purposes. Please note that for volunteers who are not Texas A&M employees or students, it may be difficult to arrange computer access.

International Students and Individuals-Special Considerations
International students must comply with certain requirements for internships and other on-campus employment. The links below will direct you to the guidelines that must be followed for international students. You may contact International Student Services for more information.

http://iss.tamu.edu/Current-Students/F-1-Status/F1-Student
http://iss.tamu.edu/Current-Students/J-1-Status/J-1-Students

Paid Interns

- Texas A&M University departments may hire interns on a paid basis following the same process for hiring any student worker position. The Student Intern Title/Description should be used.
- Individuals hired as paid Student Interns must complete a criminal background and follow pay rates and other requirements.