

Overview

SPIR (Strategic Partnerships for Industrial Resurgence) is a SUNY grant program to support university-industrial engagement that enables growth and innovation. The SPIR-Intern Development Program (IDP) is intended to support companies hiring summer interns to develop new or grow existing areas of their business by subsidizing the onboarding phase of the internship. Further, the program seeks to assist firms in establishing sustainable internship programs.

The SPIR Interns program places up to (2) students in a WNY company for up to 100 hours during the Spring semester. Student hours should not exceed 12.5 hours per week during the IDP period. The goal of the program is two-fold:

1. It provides an onboarding period during which time the intern becomes familiar with the company (products and services, value proposition, people, facilities, etc.) and to go through the onboarding procedures and training typical for new employees (safety training, paperwork, software training, etc.).
2. It provides a structured approach and time for the student and employer to collaboratively develop a plan for a summer internship (i.e. project(s) to be worked on, general roles and responsibilities).

The program is motivated by companies who have expressed interest in hiring UB Engineering and Applied Sciences interns, but have acknowledged difficulty establishing a return-on-investment to justify the resources required in hiring and training. Through this program, student interns will be ready to “hit the ground running” on the first day of the internship period. Note, this program is designed to be flexible, allowing the IDP phase to occur in as little as eight weeks, which provides opportunity for the internship period to start during the Spring semester.

Eligibility and Program Details

To be eligible for participation in the SPIR-IDP, companies must reside in New York State and complete a short application for review by the Engineering Dean’s office. The interns hired by the firm are expected to be compensated at a rate equal to (or greater than) the IDP phase and work at least 120 hours during the internship period. The program runs as follows:

Fall Semester: Intern Identification Phase

1. Company completes online application form (<http://bit.ly/spiridpapp>) for review by the Engineering Dean’s office. **Deadline:** end of September. Companies are notified of decision by mid-October.
2. Company posts up to (2) internship opportunities on the UB Career Services job board (<https://www.buffalo.edu/career/BullsEye.html>). These opportunity descriptions can be kept simple and generic but should specify the discipline and any other characteristics or restrictions for candidates (e.g. GPA requirements, domestic vs. international, year in school). The opportunity posting can highlight the departments or groups that the intern would be expected to work with but details of the position will be determined in the Spring semester. **Deadline for posting:** end of October.

3. Company interviews and selects one candidate per posted opportunity (assuming qualified candidates are found). A schedule and mentor(s) for the Spring semester are determined with the student. **Deadline for reporting:** mid-December

Spring Semester: Intern Development Phase

1. Student(s) report to the company for up to 100 hours (no more than 12.5 hours per week). They will be enrolled in a 1-credit pass/fail course at the university for this phase and be provided a \$1,000 stipend by the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.
2. Students shadow mentors and talk with various groups within the company that they may engage during their internship. This shadowing period provides students an opportunity to become familiar with the facility, operations, people and business proposition/plan of the firm. Students will complete a report based on a set of questions intended to build basic familiarity of the company (Appendix B – Assignment 1). **Deadline:** End of second week. [*Note: a site visit or phone call can be scheduled at this point to discuss specific issues or provide general support.*]
3. Students continue their shadowing, working toward independence. This portion of the IDP may include additional training activities (e.g. software tutorials/training, lab equipment) and participation in specific project meetings and activities. This will lead to the development of a specific project or description of roles/responsibilities for the internship period. Students will complete a report, based on a series of questions (Appendix B – Assignment 2), outlining those projects/responsibilities. **Deadline:** End of IDP period (no later than 10 weeks).
4. At the conclusion of this phase, the company confirms interns for the summer and works with the student to add them to the payroll per company processes. A final debrief meeting between the company and SEAS Experiential Learning office will be conducted by phone, if desired.

Summer: Paid Internship Phase

1. Students report for a paid internship. Nominally, this is expected to run from mid-May through August. However, if the IDP phase is completed earlier in the Spring semester, the paid internship period can begin then. This is to be negotiated between the student and company.
2. The primary contact from the firm will be asked to complete a brief assessment form for UB's reporting purposes per SPIR program requirements.

The goal of this program is to help companies develop a sustainable and robust model for beneficial summer internships. Companies can participate for up to three consecutive years but are expected to “graduate” at that time.

APPENDIX: Assignments to be completed by students during SPIR-IDP

The SPIR-Intern Development Program (IDP) is an initiative to familiarize summer interns with their respective companies so that they have better clarity on their role and responsibilities before starting an internship. The Development Phase is comprised of two stages with associated assignments explained below. Prospective interns are responsible for completing these assignments and reviewing them Dr. Olewnik. It is the student's responsibility to develop a schedule with the company that allows for appropriate interaction in completing these assignments.

Assignment 1: Orientation

Duration: Up to 2 weeks; Mode of Interaction: On-site (or Virtual if company is outside Buffalo)

1. Study and document an understanding of the organization's core business and operations under the following headings:
 - Industry Classification (e.g. Manufacturing, Consultancy, Engineering, etc.) | It may be helpful to search the Hoover's business database (accessible through UB Libraries - <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/pdp/index.asp?ID=208>) or the NAICS database maintained by the US Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/>)
 - History & Locations
 - Core Values & Vision
 - Product-Service Portfolio & Revenue Model + Markets Served
 - Collaborations, Affiliations & Partnerships (if any)
2. Interact with various department personnel at the organization and understand their roles/responsibilities. Explain your understanding under the following headings:
 - Organizational hierarchy (Verticals , Divisions, Departments)
 - Responsibilities of each department/division/team
 - What are their current projects?
 - What challenges do they regularly face? What is the relationship to engineering?
 - Where are the major costs for the firm (e.g. energy consumption, material costs, regulatory compliance, etc.)?
3. Discuss with the team and finalize a mentor(s) profile for the program. Share his/her details, i.e. Name, Title, Email, Department, Responsibilities and Organization Join Date.

Assignment 2: Internship definition and relevant skill development plan

Duration: Up to 10 weeks; Mode of Interaction: On-site (or Virtual if company is outside Buffalo)

1. Understand your role at the organization for the internship period and summarize it with the following information – Project(s) Name OR Expected Tasks/Responsibilities, Description, Duration, Department, Roles & Responsibilities, Project/Tasks Timeline, Deliverables and any other relevant information.
2. Briefly outline the skills that will be useful for carrying out the required role effectively i.e. Soft skills, Technical Knowledge and Software Competencies. Be sure to describe why these skills are important to your role(s) and project(s). An example list of skills/competencies is on the [NACE website](#).
3. Share if any additional skills or trainings beyond your existing competencies are required for the same (e.g. software you will use). If yes, then layout a brief plan for how will you develop/hone those skills during the remainder of the Internship Development Program; be sure to **provide a schedule** for developing those skills. Also, share if any such training is being provided by the organization: online or on-site.