NMDWS Launches Internships | Students Work Website
Jessica Nojek, Internship Program Manager

Career experience is increasingly important for students as they enter the workforce. In a survey conducted in 2016 by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 56.5 percent of students who had an internship or co-op received at least one job offer, as compared to 36.5 percent of those with no internship experience.

As a result of the growing need for students to participate in internships, Governor Susana Martinez tasked the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) to create the state’s first website linking students and job seekers to employers offering internships. Internships | Students Work (www.dws.state.nm.us/internships) was developed and launched in less than seven months by a team that included interns and developers from the Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) Ingenuity, Inc. STEMulus Center Deep Dive Coding Bootcamp, with oversight from NMDWS. Internships | Students Work complements NMDWS’s online suite of job search and career exploration resources, which includes the New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System (www.jobs.state.nm.us) and New Mexico Career Solutions (www.NMCareerSolutions.com).

Internships | Students Work is a workforce development tool for the communities of New Mexico. It was designed to not only share postings for available internships and other career experience opportunities with students and experienced professionals, but also provide information to employers and educators on how to create strong internship programs.

NMDWS’s Suite of Job Search and Career Exploration Resources

- **Internships | Students Work**: A site to get an internship and post an internship position.
  www.dws.state.nm.us/internships

- **Career Solutions**: An all-in-one career planning website and career exploration tool.
  www.NMCareerSolutions.com

- **New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System**: Search for a job, post a job, and get employment assistance.
  www.jobs.state.nm.us
A lot goes into getting the most out of internship programs from all sides. Employers are the facilitators of an internship and must abide by legal policies and create a structure that supports the development of career-ready skills for the intern. Students and experienced professionals learn career-ready skills and the day-to-day tasks of a specific job. And finally, educators need to know how to support an education curriculum that provides students with career pathway development and learning opportunities that teach career-ready skill development. Each audience uniquely contributes to the success of a career experience, which helps build a talented workforce that is invested in their community and its future.

The Homepage
Registration and Login

In the top right-hand corner of the homepage are two buttons, a “Register” button and a “Login” button. Internships | Students Work is tied to our New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System. That means that any job seeker or employer that already has created a username and password in our New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System or in New Mexico Career Solutions can already log in.

For students and any other type of job seeker, Internships | Students Work has streamlined the process to register for an account by requiring a minimum amount of information. Employers must register for accounts in the New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System to add a level of security that ensures they are employers, thereby protecting users from spammers.

Internships Video

An introduction video on internships can be viewed on the home page. The video contains testimonials from a student, an employer, and an experienced professional on how internships benefited each of them. There is also an interview with Governor Susana Martinez on the purpose behind Internships | Students Work and why internships are important for the future of New Mexico's talent pipeline.

Browse Buttons

There are also two prominent buttons on the homepage that connect users to the core functionality of Internships | Students Work. “Browse Opportunities” connects the student or experienced professional to a feed of available opportunities in New Mexico. “Browse Candidates” connects any employer that has an account in the New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System to available candidates that have posted their resume in the Internships | Students Work website. Technically, any user can browse opportunities without an account, but only a registered employer can search for qualified candidates in the system.

User Content Gateway

The homepage of Internships | Students Work is the gateway to internship-related content tailored for each user audience. Whether you are a student or experienced professional that is interested in applying for an internship, an employer looking to start a program or hire an intern, or an educator interested in teaching students about internships or starting a program within a school, each user audience has its own link to guide them in accessing targeted content and resources.

Testimonials and Data

Each section of the website includes various testimonials from local students, employers, and educators on the importance of career experiences and how their experiences positively affected them. There are also “Fast Facts” and “Tips for Success” throughout the site to engage the user with information that supports them in making decisions about a career experience.

"[When I look back on this internship process in five or ten years] I’m going to be thinking it was a smart move for me, because in five, ten years, I saw myself working a minimum wage job, and now that I have this experience from interning I can go to different HVAC companies and construction companies and show them that I have field experience. I have knowledge and skills to work into it. I have a little bit of carpentry background. I have a little bit of HVAC background." - Miguel Angel Zapata, Intern at ISHC, Graduate of Running Start for Careers

Students

The “Students” section for Internships | Students Work is designed to guide a student (whether they attend middle school, high school, or college) through the general process of planning and applying for an internship or alternative career experience. The process spans from general curiosity about what an internship or other type of career experience is to more in-depth planning, like searching and applying for an available opportunity and how to make the best of the opportunity once hired.

Students: Overview, Why Intern?, and Application Basics

The “Overview” and “Why Intern?” links on the right-hand side of the “Students” section explain what internships entail, how they benefit a student, and the important questions that need to be asked before applying for one. The “Application Basics” section then takes the student through a detailed outline of an internship application, providing content and references on building a resume to writing a cover letter, preparing for an interview, putting together a portfolio, and following up after an interview.
Student Benefits: Resume Builder and Candidate Search

The “Resume Builder” helps the user build a resume which can then be saved in a user’s account. The Resume Builder is only available to registered account holders within their “Account” once they are logged in. Once a resume is complete and the user is ready to apply for an opportunity, they can export their resume into their profile in the New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System to use in the actual application.

When a student posts their resume under their account in the Internships | Students Work website, they have the option to make themselves searchable as a candidate by registered employers. Employers can search for qualified candidates using keywords. It is important to note that any search an employer does queries non-personally identifiable information in a student’s resume. This means that no confidential information is given to the employer, and any contact that does take place happens through the NMDWS secure system and the user’s registered email. Once a student receives a notification that an employer is interested in them as a candidate, they can choose whether to contact them or not.

Student Benefits: Finding Opportunities

Students have the ability to customize an internship search once logged into their account, as long as they are registered either on Internships | Students Work, New Mexico Career Solutions, or the New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System. Students can search for opportunities using keywords tied to their interests and geographical location. The search function provides students with “Recommended Opportunities” each time they go to Browse Opportunities. While searching for available opportunities, a student can also save anything of interest into a running list to review later.

When a student is ready to apply for an opportunity, they will then be connected to our main jobs website, the New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System, where they will then be guided through the application process.

Students: Additional Resources and Other Experiences

If a student is unable to find an opportunity directly on Internships | Students Work, there is a whole section titled “Additional Resources” that provides a comprehensive list of websites that cover opportunities locally and nationally. This list helps navigate students to other online resources to help them with their search. And, if a student wishes to research other types of career experiences other than internships, the “Other Experiences” section provides information on apprenticeships, job shadowing, externships, and volunteering.
Experienced Professionals Section

Many experienced professionals are looking for internships as a way to transition into another career. Others use internships to transition back into the workforce after a break due to military service or personal or economic circumstances. These types of internships are called a variety of names, including “returnship,” a “return-to-work internship,” or a “mid-career internship.” The content for experienced professionals is basically the same as the content within the “Students” section, only tailored to a working professional applying for an opportunity.

Employers

Employers play an integral role in creating career experience opportunities for our community of students and experienced professionals. One goal of Internships | Students Work is to assist employers in creating strong internship programs and increasing the number of career experience opportunities available for New Mexico’s students and experienced professionals.

Employers: Overview, Internship Basics, and Legal Guidelines

Career experiences, particularly internships, have their own set of guidelines that must be followed by employers. An office environment is different from an educational one. Internships | Students Work provides content to help employers shift gears
and outline an internship that meets a learning objective requirement. It not only benefits the student, but also the business. The “Overview” and “Internship Basics” sections describe the process of creating an internship program, hiring an intern, and keeping everyone engaged once the intern is working.

The process of hiring, onboarding training, and working with an intern is outlined with steps that are easy to follow and that identify important questions an employer needs to answer before interviewing candidates for an internship position. There is also a downloadable “Reference Packet” for employers that provides guiding documents, including template letters and evaluation forms an employer can tailor to their own internship program. Perhaps the most daunting piece of an internship program for employers is legal compliance. Internships | Students Work dedicates a whole section to “Legal Guidelines” that includes information on unpaid internships, child labor laws, and Affordable Care Act (ACA) compliance.

Employer Benefits: Browse Candidates and Post Opportunities

An employer that has a registered account in the New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System can log in to the Internships | Students Work website and search for qualified candidates for an internship or other career experience using the “Browse Candidates” function. The “Browse Candidates” function relies on the use of keywords tied to a student's or experienced professional's resume posted on the site. If an employer sees a candidate in the system that they are interested in, they can send them a secure message through the NMDWS system, without the exchange of contact information.

An employer can view any jobs they have posted under their account in the New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System on the Internships | Students Work website once they are logged in, but they cannot modify them or post new jobs. In an effort to maintain a safe environment and protect our users from spammers, employers must use the New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System to post or modify internship postings. Also, a job must be categorized as an internship in the system for it to be visible in the Internships | Students Work website.

Educators

Internships | Students Work is a tool that educators can use as a part of career pathway development curriculum. Especially when used in conjunction with the New Mexico Career Solutions website (www.NMCareerSolutions.com), the website can be a resource for students to start thinking about jobs and occupations and how to achieve associated goals.

Educators: Creating an Internship Program and Community Resources

In addition to using this website as a resource for students, the site’s content has been geared to assist K-12 educators in creating an internship program within their school. The “Create an Internship Program” section outlines a step-by-step process for the development of an internship program that works with a school’s culture and curriculum. Included in the outline is a downloadable template packet with customizable documents. Student/School/Employer contract templates, employer outreach letters, tips on supervising an intern, a student internship application, and internship etiquette flyers are examples of available documents in the packet.

Unfortunately, educators are being equipped with less and less time to provide students with career pathway development. On the flip side, there are a growing number of community resources that can help with organizing career experience opportunities for students. The “Resources for Educators” section lists local programs and organizations available.
The End Goal: Career Experience Opportunities for All New Mexican Students

Career experience opportunities are an important aspect of growth and skill development for our youth. Internships | Students Work is designed to connect more students and job seekers with these valuable and impactful career experience opportunities, as well as grow the number of opportunities available to them from local employers. Check out www.dws.state.nm.us/internships and explore how this website can help you, or anyone you might know, today! Please contact Jessica Nojek at jessica.nojek@state.nm.us or 505-841-8852 with any questions or comments.